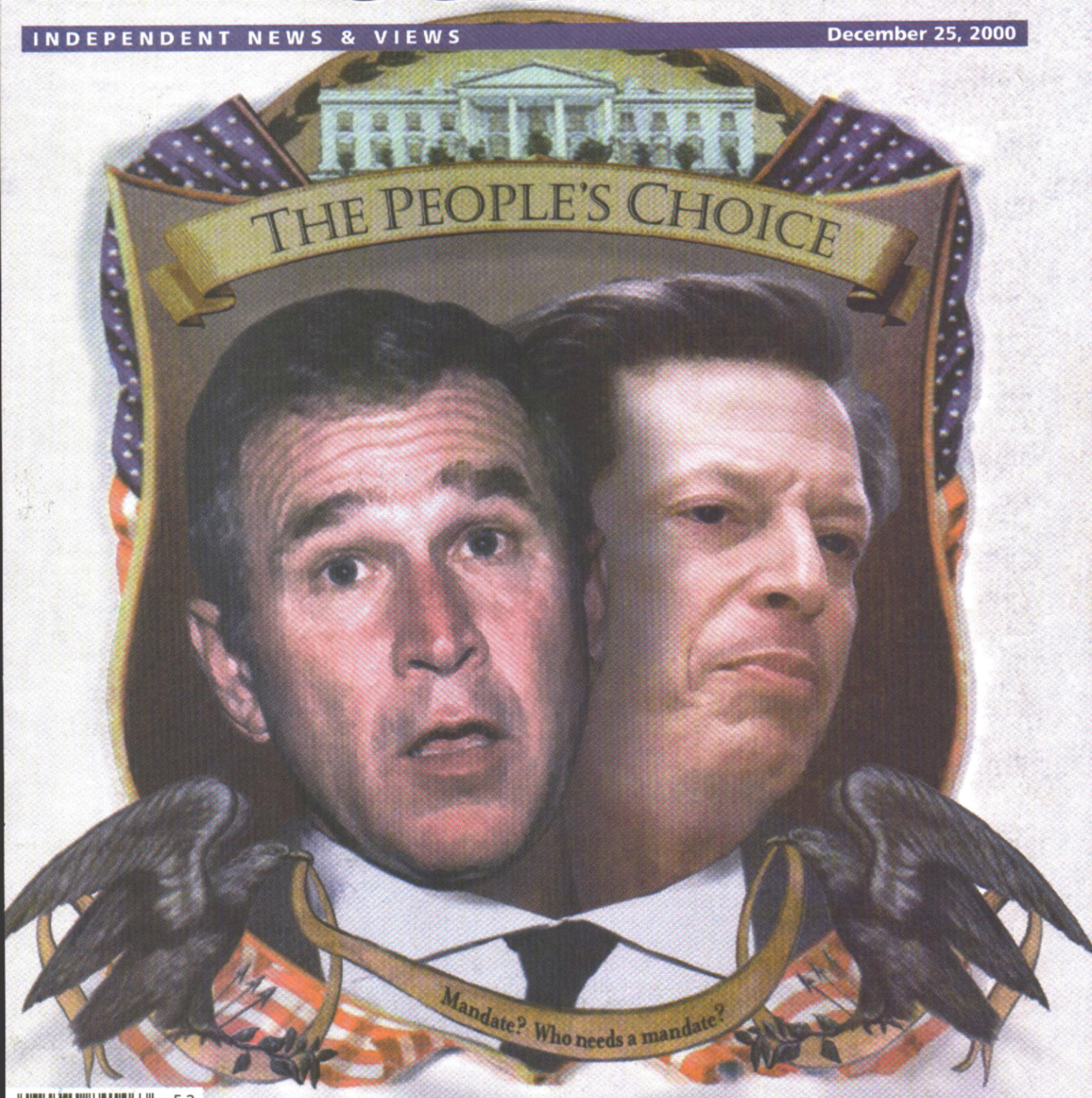
So Much for the Liberal Media • N30: One Year Later

24th Anniversary Double Issue

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

December 25, 2000



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In These Times
INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

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Publisher's Notes

As we go to press, the election continues to hinge on what happens in Florida. Waiting for a definitive result, we initially held off sending the magazine to the printer, hence this double issue.

What does this confusing election mean to the left and the causes it holds dear?

To no one's surprise, Al Gore ran a weak campaign, given the state of the economy and the remarkable popularity of Bill Clinton. Ralph Nader made a real difference, but he garnered less than 3 percent of the popular vote, suggesting that the Green Party will not be a significant factor in the next election.

The lesson here? As a start, progressive Democrats need to rebuild the progressive, populist side of the party and organize around candidates we can be enthusiastic about for the 2002 midterm congressional elections. At the same time, we should look toward 2004 with an eye on backing a presidential candidate who has a commitment to rebuilding "the movement."

All of us, whether we voted for Gore or Nader, have a role in rebuilding the progressive movement, in re-energizing the left. Where should we start?

We need a vision. But Gore didn't have one. He never told us what his grand plan for the future was. Sure, he gave us bits and pieces. ("They're for the powerful, and we're for the people—big tobacco, big oil, the big polluters, the pharmaceutical companies, the HMOs—sometimes you have to be willing to stand up and say no.") But he never wove populism into more than a quilt of policy positions and slogans. This failure of the Gore campaign is a legacy of a Clinton administration that came to office promising a "new covenant" and a "bridge to the 21st century," but then lost that vision, becoming all consumed with looking good and boosting poll numbers.

We on the left are good about identifying what we are against, but strangely ineffective articulating what we are for.

Nader energized the campaign because he began to formulate a progressive vision: "The two major parties have abdicated their responsibility to lead, to advocate solutions and to promote true democracy from the city halls to Congress and the White House. We can do better." Where will this vision go? Will it remain outside the Democratic Party or can it be used to rebuild the progressive wing? Since 1990, the Democratic Party has been dominated by the centrist ideology of the Democratic Leadership Council. Can the locus of power change?

Developing a positive progressive vision is a vital first step. Those of us on the left are very good about identifying what we are against, but strangely ineffective articulating what we are for. We have carried the day convincing the American public that we face an environmental crisis—80 percent share this belief. But when we talk about steps to take to avert the crisis, such as switching to ecologically sustainable manufacturing practices, the eyes of the American public glaze over.

The way to begin is by better incorporating key elements from the Nader campaign with the tried-and-true issues of the progressive Democratic agenda. To the economic justice components of the Nader proposals (like raising the national minimum wage to a living wage) add the traditional Democratic support of a woman's right to choose. To the Nader proposals that address inequities of corporate compensation (top executive salaries that are 400 times those of the rank and file) add the traditional civil rights agenda of the Democrats.

The cornerstone should be federal campaign finance reform. John McCain garnered enormous support with this issue. It was a key plank of the Nader campaign. Polls indicate that a strong majority of Americans want fundamental campaign finance reform. Why not lead with this?

Given the mixed results of the election, there will be a tendency to point fingers. We need to move beyond blame, to put this election behind us, and start working together to build a revitalized progressive movement.

In the next issue, I'll say more about what the key elements of this movement should be. In the meantime, I'd like to hear from you. Write to me at bburnett@inthesetimes.com.

Bob Burnett

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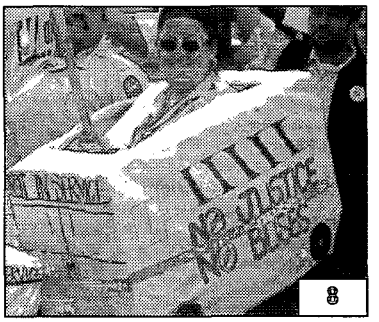
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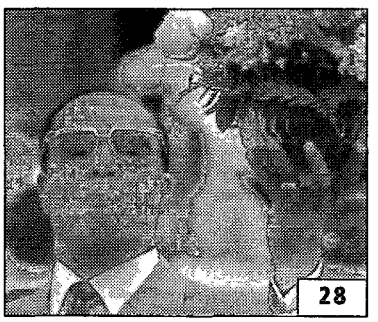
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Letters

Not a Panacea

Barbara Seaman's "New Pill, Old Problems" (November 13) is refreshing. All too many reports on RU-486 have claimed it to be a panacea. But she did miss the forest for the trees.

There is no doubt that mifepristone is a welcome addition for the nation's abortion practitioners like myself. Anything that adds to choice adds to women's freedom. However, there are several considerations that should be drawn from the clamor.

First, those of us in the abortion trade wonder if this is a step forward at all. Mifeprex requires an added pill (misoprostol), at least two doctor consultations, plus the post-abortal visit. The patient also must return home for several days to judge the quality of her hemorrhaging and cramping. Compare that to the present setup where a woman can come in over her lunch hour, accept either a local or brief general anesthesia, have a two- or three-minute procedure, and return to her activities that day or the next morning—all at half the cost of RU-486.

Second, RU-486 must not take away from all that has been accomplished. Since *Roe v. Wade*, more than a million terminations are performed yearly with the smallest complication rate for any minor surgery in history, one of medicine's proudest moments. To feel the choice movement must continually fix something that isn't broken falls into the trap of the anti-choicers.

Third, and most important, France and the other countries where mifepristone is available also have universal health care, something America shamefully lacks. It is only a matter of time before the abortion pill becomes accessible to the millions of women in the United States without such coverage, and they will be left to their own wiles in times of medical emergency or worse. For many women abortion-denial is a microcosm of the lack of affordable health care in America. That is the message of RU-486.

Don Sloan, M.D.
New York

Correction

We have discovered that two articles published in *In These Times* under the byline of freelance writer Jason Sholl contained unattributed material from other publications.

"Day-Glo Bacchanalia" in the August 7 issue, a review of the film *Groove*, included passages from previously published articles by Simon Reynolds of the *Village Voice* ("Screen Ravers," May 9, 2000), Elizabeth Weitzman of the New York *Daily News* (" 'Groove' raves with lunacy," June 9, 2000), and Jonathan Foreman of the *New York Post* ("Rave about 'Groove' and the techno scene," June 9, 2000).

"Under the Influence" in the September 4 issue, a review of the book *Writing on Drugs*, included passages from previously published articles by Steve Beard of the *Sunday Herald* ("Drugs: The Highs and Lows," August 15, 2000), Elisabeth Mahoney of the *Scotsman* ("High Society," October 9, 1999), and Toby Mundy of the *New Statesman* ("High Hopes," October 11, 1999).

We deeply regret these errors.

David Brower 1912-2000

David Brower died on November 5 at his home in Berkeley, California, a few blocks away from the house where he was born in 1912. That alone says a lot about who Brower was. He was a Westerner, and something of a homebody. His life was rooted in place.

But Brower's vision was vast and encompassing. Although he was one of the world's most accomplished mountain climbers (with 70 first ascents and a trek into the Himalayas while he was in his seventies), he was one of first to get beyond the notion of wilderness as merely an aesthetic landscape of alpine scenery, rocks and ice. He connected the concept to ecosystems, those wild corridors of life, and fought relentlessly and fearlessly to save those big blank spaces on the maps.

His accomplishments are written on the landscape in the dozens of wilderness areas and national parks he helped create: Kings Canyon, North Cascades, Great Basin, Redwood, Point Reyes, Misty Fiords, Glacier Bay. He kept dams out of Dinosaur National Monument, the Yukon and the Grand Canyon. He battled nuclear power plants and was one of the first to view the military-industrial complex as a threat to the global environment.

The early conservation movement, led by the likes of John Muir and Aldo Leopold, was imbued with a stern, almost misanthropic demeanor. Brower humanized environmentalism. He knew that the war to preserve wilderness couldn't be waged by an elite cadre of mountain climbers and rich, white neo-transcendentalists. It would have to be a people's movement. And Brower, more than anyone else, shaped the modern environmental movement into a political force that reached across lines of class, race and gender.

"When they win, it's forever; when we win, it's merely a stay of execution. We've got to remain eternally vigilant." This was one of Brower's favorite maxims. No victory can be taken for granted. No inch of ground is forever safe. Yet for all the tragic battles and losses that Brower witnessed, he never became embittered. Brower had a Westerner's ingrained sense of optimism. He always maintained faith that a new generation would come along with energy and vision and determination to escalate the fight.

It's no coincidence that the last year of his life was one of his most productive. He helped create a new and promising coalition, the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, an unlikely marriage of Earth First!ers and Steelworkers. Brower was in Seattle last November, siding with the street warriors, denouncing the cops, railing at the lords of international finance. He spoke with authority about the betrayals of the Clinton/Gore administration. Shortly before he died, he filled out his absentee ballot, voting for Ralph Nader and a slate of Green Party candidates in California.

I last saw Brower in March in Page, Arizona at a protest on the rim of Glen Canyon, overlooking that hated dam. Rightly or wrongly, Brower felt a measure of guilt for the dam's existence. To keep a dam out of Dinosaur National Monument, he had looked the other way when the Bureau of Reclamation planned this monstrosity. Then he floated down the Colorado and realized what a mystical place would be lost. "Don't trade a place you know for one you don't," he said.

That's good advice for any political warrior. But Brower learned his lesson and never stopped trying to right an old wrong. On that day, the old fire was in Brower's eyes as he looked out not on that wretched reservoir, but on the 500 Greens assembled on a weekday in one of the most remote parts of the Southwest. He looked to the future and a vibrant new movement that had staked its claim of resistance in the very belly of the beast. "Never let them beat you down as being doomsters or naysayers," Brower said. "Because if you are against a dam, you're for a river. It's time to let this river run free."

Jeffrey St. Clair

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Feel Better Now?

By Joel Bleifuss

Despite the ballot controversy in Florida, the presidential election did produce confirmed winners: One of them was Ralph Nader.

Nader did his part to defeat Al Gore, as was his stated goal. In the last weeks of his campaign, Nader ignored Gore-safe states like California and New York, where he could have appealed to progressives to vote tactically and increase his national vote total. Instead, he concentrated on Oregon, Minnesota and Wisconsin, where the Nader turnout nearly swung the states to George W. Bush.

In his public statement after the election, Nader justified his spoiler role, saying that the Democratic Party "has been seized by its conservative-moderate, pro-corporate wing," which "produced a candidate and a platform that simply did not excite the voters." He went on to say: "Progressives in the Democratic Party must decide whether they want to remain a captive of the Democratic Leadership Council and its love affair with the big corporate money that fills the party's coffers."

While Nader is correct that the Democratic Party failed to nominate a candidate or put forth a platform that inspired voters, on all the rest he is off-base. Progressive Democrats are not hostages of the Democratic Leadership Council and its corporate sponsors. Yes, the DLC exerts great influence over the party, especially the Democratic National Committee in Washington. But the Democratic Party is not a monolith; it is a collection of local and state organizations of varying political hues.

The party is home to centrist Wall Street bankers and corporate liberals; it is also the political arena where the majority of African-Americans, Latinos, trade unionists, feminists, environmentalists, and gays and lesbians practice politics. Nader has acknowledged that Congress contains about 80 good representatives. All of these men and women have solid anti-corporate credentials. All are supported and elected by activists and voters that call the Democratic Party home. And, yes, most of them voted for Gore—not because he was their ideal candidate, but because he was better than Bush.

The Green Party could be a vehicle for progressive change if we elected our representatives through a system of proportional representation. The current winner-take-all system, however, prevents the formation of successful third parties. That is a reality. And while Nader calls on people "to join the Green Party," the party doesn't exist as a coherent entity, which explains why he is not a member—there is no party to join.

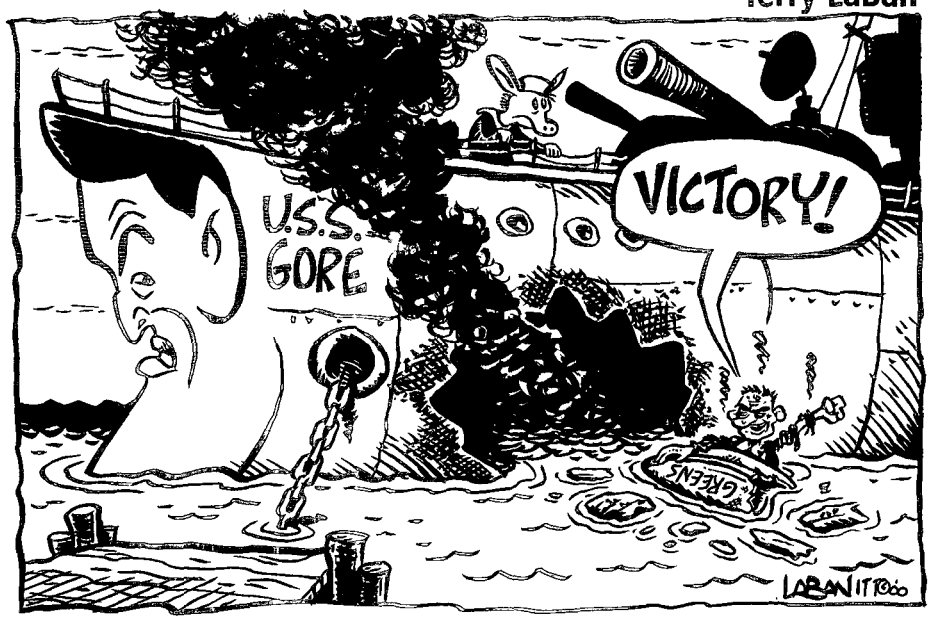
Nader promised to "transform this year's race into an open debate on corporate control of our democracy and our lives." This much needed discussion would have found a much wider audience if Nader had run as a Democrat in the primary. He would have been in all the televised debates and addressed the Democratic Convention. From that platform, Nader's message would have found a national audience far greater than the talk show appearances and sound bites that were generated by his Green Party campaign. From that platform, Nader's call for citizen, not corporate, rule would have found a sympathetic ear among progressive Democrats—those unionists, African-Americans, Latinos, feminists, environmentalists, and gays and lesbians to whom the Democratic Party is home.

A left electoral strategy should aim to unify progressive voters. A Nader bid for the Democratic nomination would have done that. Yes, he would have lost, but such a campaign could have laid the foundation for the creation of a caucus—let's call them Green Democrats—that could challenge the DLC in congressional primaries across the country in 2002 and fight for the soul of the party.

Instead, Nader and his largely white, middle-class, youthful followers chose the righteous path of the true believer. While that may have made them feel good, it did little to advance a progressive agenda. Indeed, should Bush become president, the gains of the past eight years will be nullified—a fact not lost on those Nader supporters who abandoned their candidate on November 7 and wisely, if reluctantly, cast a pragmatic vote for Gore. ■

Progressive Democrats are not hostages of the Democratic Leadership Council.

Terry LaBan



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Barak and a Hard Place

Israeli leader bows to pressure from hawkish right

By Charmaine Seitz

JERUSALEM—Ehud Barak likes to keep things under control. So it's easy to understand why the Israeli leader seems unraveled. In the past few months, Barak has overseen a complete about-face in Israel's relationship with the Arab world. Negotiations with Palestinians have flamed into open violence that has all 10,000 of Israel's regular soldiers deployed in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. For the first time since the Gulf War, a full Arab summit was called in October—with the express mission of censuring Israel.

In the midst of all this, Barak is hanging on to his office only by good grace. The ultra-orthodox Shas Party pulled its 17 seats from the government coalition in July, just before Barak headed to Camp David for a summit with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Reports of the concessions that Barak made, including Palestinian sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem, caused right-wing members of his government to resign in protest. Barak currently has the support of approximately one-third of the Israeli parliament, although Shas has agreed temporarily not to abandon ship. "Many people will tell you that [Barak] is a bright person," says Israeli journalist Danny Rubenstein. "But he is a lousy politician. The only reason that he is still in power is because it is a state of emergency. Those on the side of the peace process say that he asked for a total end to the peace process. The situation is one that can't be dealt with like that. It is a slow process that must be taken step-by-step."

Israel's right faults Barak for trying to give too much to a Palestinian leadership they say is ill-willed. "Arafat was never a peace partner," says Helen Bohrer of Beit El, a settlement north of Ramallah. "The Arabs were never a peace partner. They have their own agenda."

Even the Israeli military has criticized Barak—who was once a general himself. When a lone Palestinian shot and killed one Israeli security guard and wounded another on October 30, Barak ordered air strikes on official buildings in the Palestinian areas. But army officers called the helicopter strikes ineffective, according to the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, because they did little real damage, while at the same time escalating the tension in the West Bank and Gaza.

Barak has tried to stave off his political demise by forming a national unity government with right-wing leader Ariel Sharon. Talks broke down, however, when Sharon insisted on approving all decisions in the new government. "There will be no veto over the prime minister," Barak replied.

Instead, it appears that both Barak and Sharon will eventually be overtaken by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who recently was cleared of allegations of financial irregularities. Current polls show Netanyahu would defeat Barak in a two-way race to lead the country, despite Barak's overwhelming defeat of the hawkish leader in the last Israeli elections. Netanyahu was also more popular than Sharon.

Perhaps the only thing that Barak will be remembered well for is getting Israel out of Lebanon. Making good on a campaign promise, the prime minister unilaterally withdrew from south Lebanon in July, a move that was met with resounding Israeli applause. Public support for the 18-year occupation had dwindled due to the high number of Israeli casualties.

But Lebanon still plagues Barak. The Lebanese government does not accept the lines to which Israel has withdrawn, and Hezbollah has vowed to continue its attacks until Israel is all the way out. In early October, Hezbollah dramatically rose in stature in the Arab world when it captured three Israeli soldiers and a man they say was a spy. In exchange for their release, they are demanding that Israel free the Lebanese in its own jails. At some point, Israel will have to respond.



STEVE ANDERSON

Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon visited Chicago in mid-November to attend the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities; 2,500 people turned out to protest.

For now the Barak government is making do with quelling the unrest in the occupied territories. Public demonstrations have been augmented by Palestinian fighters firing M-16s at the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli military has responded with attack helicopters, ground missiles and tanks in Palestinian civilian areas. Nearly 200 Palestinians and more than a dozen Israelis have been killed. Amnesty International has condemned the Israeli use of force as "possible war crimes."

At the funeral processions of Palestinians killed in the clashes, marchers are carrying a new flag—the yellow banner of Hezbollah.

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Palestinians are looking to the group for inspiration—only repeated military strikes on Israeli targets pushed Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, they say. Even if the bloodshed stops, both sides see little hope for negotiations. "After this, I can't imagine peace," says Mustapha Abu Aker, whose Bethlehem-area home was hit by rounds of Israeli machinegun fire. "Who will pay for the martyrs and the strikes?"

Rubinstein concurs. After the attacks from areas under Palestinian control, he says that Israelis will never agree to further troop withdrawals from the West Bank and Gaza, as called for in current peace agreements. Instead, he believes that the low-level warfare will continue. "We are going to be like Lebanon," he says in frustration.

It seems that instead of getting Israel out of Lebanon, Barak has brought the northern front a little closer to home. ■

Charmaine Seitz *is managing editor of* Palestine Report.

Divided Nations

A growing number of countries fly in the face of U.N. sanctions on Iraq

By Anthony Arnove

A number of countries have recently defied the U.S. government and sent planes to Baghdad, which has been under an unofficial air embargo since the Gulf War. The flights are a clear indication that the United States is growing more isolated in its support for sanctions on Iraq.

Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, France, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Russia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen together have sent more than 30 planes with relief supplies and delegations of doctors, business people and government officials to Iraq since August, openly challenging the U.S. view that U.N. sanctions prohibit such flights.

While Egypt and Syria ignored a 1990 U.N. resolution that calls for U.N. inspection and approval of such flights—but does not openly bar them—most of the countries flying to Baghdad have given advance notice. France and Russia, both permanent members of the Security Council, which oversees and maintains the sanctions, notified the United Nations of its flights, but did not wait for clearance.

Baghdad also resumed domestic flights on November 5, flying planes into two areas where British and American jets have flown thousands of sorties and routinely fired at Iraqi aircraft. Two Russian planes took off at the same time for Mosul, in the north, and Basra, in the south, in an open challenge to the so-called "no-fly zones." "We will continue to monitor closely any Iraqi aviation to determine whether it poses a threat to our forces, Iraq's neighbors or the Iraqi people," an unnamed spokesman for the State Department told The Associated Press.

Even Turkey, which has served as a base for the U.S.-led bombing campaign against Iraq, has flown two flights to Iraq. "The international sanctions on Iraq are clearly crumbling," the government-aligned *Turkish Daily News* editorialized. "The flights to Baghdad may be symbolic, but they reveal a more important trend, that more and more countries do not want to 'punish' the Iraqi people any more."

Another sign of Iraq's improving position among Arab countries was it's invitation to an emergency Arab summit meeting in October, called by Egypt in response to the recent outbreak of violence in Israel and the occupied territories. Iraq had been excluded from Arab League meetings since August 1990. Egypt has since announced that it is re-establishing diplomatic relations with Iraq, which had been broken since the Gulf War. "We are under tremendous pressure from public opinion" to end the sanctions, explains Soliman Awaad, who works in Egypt's foreign ministry. "I'm not

NYUnion

After two years of organizing and legal battles, graduate students at New York University have a union. NYU is the first private college in the country with union representation for graduate student workers.

Organizers, who are affiliated with the United Auto Workers, have endured a long fight with the university's administration, which has refused to view the teaching and research assistants as employees. Graduate students work for their departments upwards of 30 hours a week in exchange for stipends averaging $13,000 per year. They receive no benefits.

The large workloads often delay students from obtaining their degrees, as course work must be squeezed in between departmental duties. Low pay often forces talented but cash-strapped students to drop out. But the new unions will give students the power to bargain for higher wages, health coverage and other perks.

About 1,500 students voted on a referendum to unionize in April, but the results were not approved until November 16, due to a decision pending at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Washington. After the vote, the ballots were impounded while the administration appealed an earlier decision by the NLRB's Northeast regional director, who had ruled in favor of the students.

On November 8, the NLRB unaminously upheld the ruling, noting that all graduate students at private universities have a right to unionize. But the results were further delayed as the administration and graduate students disputed the validity of ballots cast by business and science students. In the final tally, the students won 619 to 551.

But NYU has not yet finished fighting and could throw the matter into the courts. The administration may refuse to negotiate, forcing the union to sue over unfair labor practices. But Jonathan Hiatt, general counsel for the AFL-CIO, told the *New York Times* that the Supreme Court has consistently favored the NLRB's rulings.

The events at NYU are energizing budding union drives at other major private institutions, such as Yale, the University of Chicago and Northwestern. But a powerful coalition of universities–including Columbia, Johns Hopkins, MIT, Stanford, Yale, Princeton, Washington University and Boston University–has steadfastly supported the NYU administration and will no doubt discourage organizing efforts on other campuses.

Kristin Kolb-Angelbeck

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confining this to Egypt only, but all through the region."

On November 2, Jordanian Prime Minister Abu al-Ragheb became the highest-ranking official to fly to Iraq since sanctions were imposed when he visited a trade fair in Baghdad, which was widely seen as a challenge to the sanctions.

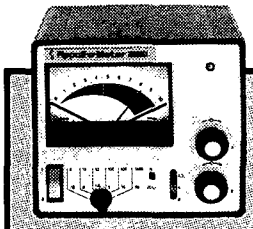
Arab governments were clearly hearing more calls to speak out against the embargo as a result of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, which for many is a another symbol of the U.S. government's support for human rights abuses in the Middle East. "We are sending a message to Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon that we shall not stand with our arms tied while you are killing Palestinians," says Muhammad Monieb, explaining why he organized a flight of more than 100 Egyptian celebrities to Baghdad.

Sanctions on Iraq have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis by badly eroding the country's infrastructure. The State Department claims that the United Nations' so-called "oil-for-food" program would be sufficient to meet the humanitarian needs of the population, if not for deliberate interference and stockpiling of goods by the Iraqi government. But a new report by Tun Myat, U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, has provided strong evidence to challenge this view.

Myat, a former World Food Program official who was appointed head of the oil-for-food program after the previous two humanitarian coordinators resigned in protest against the sanctions, told the United Nations that "the Iraqi food distribution system is probably second to none that you'll find anywhere in the world" and that food "gets to everybody whom it's supposed to get to in the country."

However, Myat explains, "People have become so poor in some cases that they can't even afford to eat the food that they are given free, because for many of them the food ration represents the major part of their income."

Given the devastation of the Iraqi economy, which has caused mass unemployment and dramatic devaluation of the Iraqi dinar, Myat says, "to sustain their livelihood, [Iraqis often] sell part of what they get" in food and medicine to pay for other basic necessities. ■



Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

To Hell and Back 7.8

The exorcist is back! And not just the movie. The ancient art of demon removal apparently is making a big comeback, according to a recent report in the *Los Angeles Times*. Not that long ago, there were only a handful of honest-to-God exorcists in the United States. But over the past few years, Fordham University Professor Michael Cuneo estimates, the number of exorcism ministries has grown to perhaps 600, some sporting flamboyant names like "Demon Stompers" and others offering exorcisms over the phone—or even over the radio. Exorcism has taken root mostly among evangelical Christians. Yet even the Catholic Church has begun to quietly step back into the exorcism business, appointing more than a dozen official exorcists in the United States.

In some ministries, old-fashioned go-demon-into-the-pits-of-Hell exorcism is now supplemented with a hefty dose of pop psychology. At Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, California, the *Times* reports, several dozen counselors urge the demon-possessed to examine their past for childhood traumas that might have opened the doors for Satan's forces. Lay pastor Albert Landry says the new techniques offer real hope. "In the early days, we would cast out demons, but we would find they would come right back again," Landry told the *Times*. "The counseling approach gets to the root of the problem."

The Witch Hunter 8.3

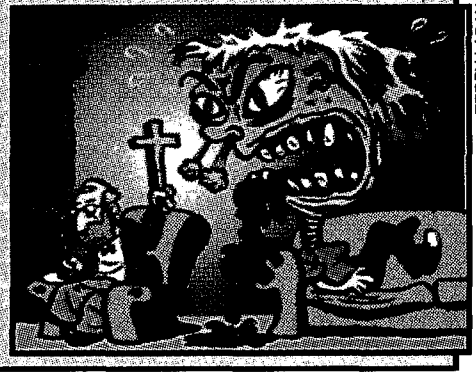
An Oklahoma high school student says she was suspended from school last December after being accused of casting a magic spell that made one of her teachers sick. According to a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union in federal court, the assistant principal of Union Intermediate High School in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, quite literally conducted a witch hunt against student Brandy Blackbear after discovering she had taken an interest in Wicca.

Shortly after one of her teachers fell ill last December, the suit alleges, assistant principal Charlie Bushyhead accused Blackbear "of casting spells causing [the teacher] ... to be sick and to be hospitalized." Bushyhead then told the girl "that she was an immediate threat to the school and summarily suspended her for what he arbitrarily determined to be a disruption of the education process."

Lawyers for the school are keeping quiet for now, saying that confidentiality agreements forbid them from responding to questions raised about the case. But Blackbear's parents are speaking up against what they see as ludicrous allegations. "It's hard for me to believe that in the year 2000 I am walking into court to defend my daughter against charges of witchcraft brought by her own school," Blackbear's father told the press.

The Raffleman, Part II 5.1

Political power flows from the barrel of a gun, Mao once said. Apparently some Georgia gun nuts agree. On Election Day, two gun shops in the Atlanta suburbs offered gun-loving voters the chance to win a 12-gauge shotgun worth more than $1,000—just for stopping off with proof they'd cast their ballots at the polls. Organizers of the ill-advised gun raffle—the second one in as many editions of the Appall-o-Meter—say they just wanted to increase voter turnout. But a spokesman for Handgun Control called the scheme "incredibly irresponsible."



TERRY LABAN

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VINCE BUCCI/AFP

Los Angeles bus drivers rally outside the Metropolitan Transit Authority's headquarters.

this divide in the course of one of the most bitter labor disputes in recent memory shows a new level of sophistication in both communities.

What riders and drivers finally saw clearly was the real reason for raising bus fares—not salaries, but the huge construction budgets for new rail systems bringing mostly white commuters in from the suburbs. The rail system in turn supports further land development on the city's fringe. Giant firms paid millions to do the work, and the old guard of the city's labor movement—the building trades—are eager to get the construction jobs.

When MTA chose to cut bus service to pay for rail, the Bus Riders Union, an organizing project of the Los Angeles Labor-Community Strategy Center, went to court and secured minimum service levels and better maintenance on the buses. The transit strike was originally another defensive battle, waged against MTA efforts to win further concessions to pay ballooning construction costs. MTA planned to convert hundreds of existing full-time jobs to part-time and reduce their salaries.

MTA also wanted to break up the transit system into autonomous zones. "We've opposed the so-called transit zones from the very beginning," says Eric Mann, a member of the riders' union planning committee. "We see them as a move to lower wages and eventually privatize the system, bringing service cuts and higher fares for riders as contractors look for higher profits. The drivers saw this too."

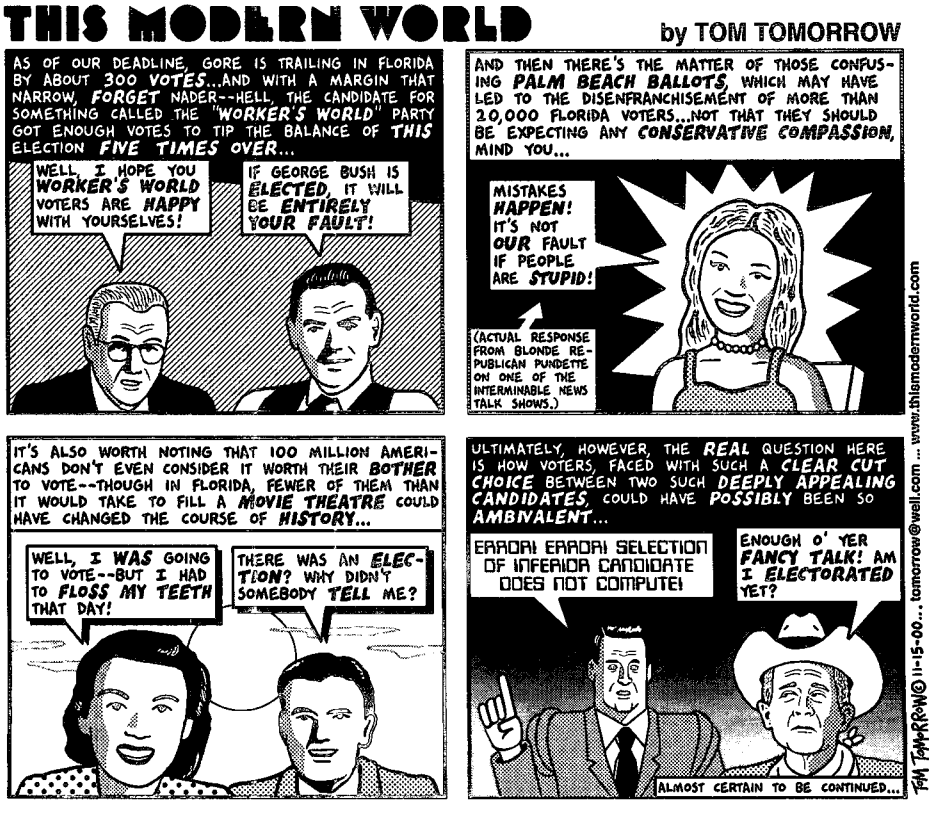
As soon as the strike began, the riders' union began organizing big rallies to support the drivers. At the end of the strike, more than 850 drivers signed letters demanding no cuts in service.

Miguel Contreras, the first Latino head of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, also came to the drivers' defense. The federation's most active unions include janitors, hotel workers and garment workers. Community-based projects organizing day laborers and domestics have won labor support. They all had to respond to the needs of their members as bus riders.

Against this alliance, Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan and Gov. Gray Davis proved powerless. In the middle of the strike, Davis agreed to sign legislation guaranteeing that for four years, MTA workers would keep their jobs, wages and union contracts in the event of the breakup of the transit system. He then tried to use the agreement as leverage to get union leaders to send their members back to work.

The supervisors' and mechanics' unions both urged their members to cross picket lines. But only eight of 1,800 mechanics crossed. James Williams, head of the drivers' local of United Transportation Union, declined the governor's blandishments. In the process, both riders and drivers protected the city-wide bus system, decreasing the likelihood that the district will be broken up and privatized.

The strike ended in compromise. The settlement allows the MTA to



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begin hiring part-timers at lower wages. Overtime will be limited, and management will be able to intervene on work rules. But these compromises are set in a new political reality. The city's low-wage workers showed themselves willing to defend higher wage-earners. Latinos made common cause with African-Americans. Drivers came out against service cuts directed against working-class bus riders.

The transit strike is just one example of the big changes taking shape in L.A. unions. Just a few months ago, the city's immigrant janitors fought a celebrated strike to make drastic improvements in wages and conditions, the latest in a series of rebellions from below. Like the bus drivers, they won the support of the city's emerging Latino political establishment against the downtown old guard.

The janitors' and bus drivers' strikes are part of a wave of union activity that has challenged the city's historic reputation as the home of the open shop. This year has also seen an actors' strike against commercial producers (which, while recently settled, may be only a prelude to a much larger strike against the movie industry next year), a major organizing drive at LAX international airport, and rolling strikes leading to a one-day stoppage of 47,000 county workers. Even the city's huge teachers' union has taken a strike vote.

Each of these disputes has its own particular history, but under it all is the decade-long upsurge in organizing and union activism by millions of immigrant workers. That upsurge changed the balance of forces in the city's labor movement. Unions like the hotel workers and janitors have replaced the building trades as the dominant forces in the labor federation, giving a base to new leaders like Contreras. And with the muscle of those unions mobilizing hundreds of thousands of new citizens, the political structure has shifted as well. Even the recent change in the AFL-CIO's position on immigration was in large part a response to what's gone on in Los Angeles.

A decade ago the bus drivers would have been hung out to dry. Instead, this movement of immigrant-based labor activism came to their aid, recognizing a common interest in the defense of public services and the workers who provide them. The city's low-wage workers desperately need the public sector—social welfare, better public schools, subsidized transportation, free healthcare and other services. This new labor-based alliance has the power to redefine who will benefit from the city's new economy. ■

Men with Guns

A federal jury in Florida has cleared two former Salvadoran military commanders of any wrongdoing in the 1980 executions of four American churchwomen. The brutal murders were part of a bloody civil war that wracked El Salvador from 1979 to 1992, and claimed the lives of some 75,000 people.

The lawsuit was filed under the 1992 Torture Victims Protection Act, which allows victims' families to seek damages from those who bear "command responsibility" for the crimes committed by their subordinates.

On December 2, 1980, three nuns, Ford, Maura Clarke and Dorothy Kazel, along with lay missionary Jean Donovan, were kidnapped by Salvadoran soldiers and taken to a remote village, where they were raped and shot to death.

Jose Guillermo Garcia and Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova both served as El Salvador's Minister of Defense during the civil war, and are currently retired and living in Florida. The case marked the first time defendants have been present to face charges leveled under the Torture Victims Protection Act.

Five soldiers were convicted of the murders in 1984, but a subsequent U.N. Truth Commission determined that Garcia and Vides Casanova obstructed the investigation. Shortly thereafter, four of the men told investigators they were acting on orders from superiors.

Families of the victims were shocked at the verdict, but vowed to continue publicizing the atrocities of El Salvador, which were supported by $7 billion in American aid under the Reagan and Bush administrations.

They also hope justice may yet be served; Garcia and Vides Casanova will be back in court in May to face allegations of torture in a second suit, filed by four Salvadoran exiles.

Evan Endicott

L.L. Mean

Outdoorsy retailer gets hostile toward union drive

By Jane Slaughter

L.L. Bean is one of those companies that sells image as much as goods. "Wholesome" might be the focus-group buzzword for the Maine catalog retailer, with its outdoorsy concept and its online guide to the parks of the world. L.L. Bean's image is even a reason some workers apply there. But changes in management practices have touched off a union organizing drive. Says John Snow (not his real name), a seven-year employee in Bean's warehouse, "People's biggest single complaint is that they just don't tell the truth."

L.L. Bean employs workers at call centers, warehouses and manufacturing plants in several Maine towns. One four-year employee who also asked that his name not be used says, "I came to Maine wanting to work for L.L. Bean. I was attracted to them because I saw them as selling practical products that got people outdoors. I figured with all this glamorous hype, some of it must be true. I was one of these morons who only saw the catalog."

Maxine Mullen, who works in the returns department, says that "L.L. Bean's always had the reputation that it was a very hard place to get into" (workers must hire on as seasonals during the fall rush before being considered for regular jobs), "but once you got in, you could plan your future. The reality is that every year since I've been here they've taken away more and more and given less and less."

Fortune magazine ranked L.L. Bean 36th on its list of 100 best companies to work for in 1998, 100th in 1999—and not on the list at all in 2000. Many union supporters date the beginning of their troubles to the departure of a slew of vice presidents and their replacement by outsiders.

Snow tells this story about the "different breed of manager": A manager was doing budgets, calculator in hand, with a supervisor, and punched in a number. The manager said he needed the supervi-

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sor to cut his budget by that amount. The supervisor protested, "I've already cut three times. Did you ever consider the people?" The manager held up the calculator and said, "Do you see any people in here?"

After paying annual bonuses, sometimes as high as 16 percent, for many years, the company paid no bonuses in 1997, and haven't since. "They had a plan to not pay bonuses for five years and invest in retail store expansion," Snow says. "They didn't tell the employees, but the higher-ups knew that."

Dick Roy, a returns worker, says employees are tired of low and inconsistent pay. Wages turn on annual individual appraisals, resulting in different pay for the same work. Roy says the average wage in the warehouse is about $20,000 a year. Workers charge the company plays with budget figures to justify the lack of bonuses.

A new wage scale announced last winter gave no increase to the lowest-paid employees, but 5 to 6 percent raises higher up the ladder. Some workers can't even be sure of a full week's pay. At the call centers, where a majority of the workers are women, Snow says, "if the phones are not ringing, they send them home."

The first organizing meeting called by Teamsters Local 340 in late March attracted 250 L.L. Bean workers. Says local President Bob Piccone, a veteran of several abortive attempts to unionize the 4,000 L.L. Bean employees, "It surprised us, to be truthful." The union had brought only 50 brochures.

L.L. Bean responded quickly to the union's presence, hiring the well-known anti-union law firm of Seaforth and Shaw. So far company strategy has included both mandatory small group meetings to discuss the union and various "carrots"—an extra day off, a free breakfast, raises for team leaders. Some long-term seasonals were made regular employees. A revamping of pay grades, in the works for years, finally materialized, resulting in raises for some. "People say, 'We know we got the raise because of the union threat, but it's not too bad,' " Snow reports.

Workers say the campaign is moving slowly now, after a flurry of newsletters and the initial big turnout. In October, though, management announced that workers will have to pay higher insurance premiums, a move sure to stir dissent. Roy says that employee insurance payments have risen 53 percent in the past five years, while pay has risen only 15 percent.

At the same time, the company increased a few benefits: They will now cover "domestic associates"—unmarried gay or straight couples—a move sure to land L.L. Bean on some "good employer" lists. "And we'll now get a free annual colorectal screening," Mullen adds. "I thought that was great, because I felt like I'd just gotten one." ■



AMIT BHARGAVA/NEWSMAKERS)

Dammed If You Don't: Members of Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada) marched through the streets Delhi, India on November 13 and 14 to protest the visit of World Bank President James Wolfensohn. The World Bank president supports a massive hydroelectric project that would flood the Narmada River valley, leaving 400,000 people homeless. Currently, 135 large dams and more than 3,000 small dams are planned for the river, which originates in central India and flows to the Arabian Sea. The group joined 1,000 environmental and anti-globalization protesters in Delhi, who condemned World Bank policies for deepening poverty in India. They demanded to meet with Wolfensohn about their concerns, but World Bank officials said his schedule was too busy.

Linda Bean, a Right-Wing Dream

Linda Bean Folkers, granddaughter of L.L. Bean and heiress to his sizable fortune, has long been identified as a philanthropist of the extreme right. Folkers and her husband Donald have thrown thousands of dollars at, among others, Newt Gingrich's infamous GOPAC, the Republican Coalition for Life, and the Eagle Forum—conservative matriarch Phyllis Schlafly's clearinghouse originally established to combat the Equal Rights Amendment.

But with the 2000 election, it seems the Folkers have abandoned the Republican establishment in favor of the truly frightening. A search on "Open Secrets," the exhaustive campaign-finance database of the Washington-based Center for Responsive Politics, turned up $20,000 in individual contributions from the Folkers to the U.S. Taxpayer's Party, which was renamed the Constitution Party this fall.

The basic premise of the Constitution Party, according to its Web site, is "limiting the federal government to its Constitutional boundaries and returning our nation's legal system back to its biblical foundation." Its three main issues are the abolition of taxes, making abortion illegal and eliminating public education as "all teaching" should be "related to basic assumptions about God." "The U.S. Constitution," the party's preamble reads, "established a republic under God, rather than a democracy."

Among other jaw-droppers, the party also favors repealing the Voting Rights Act, building state and local militias, and getting rid of our national parks. As for the United Nations, "We say No! to any so-called New World Order to any one-world government," the platform reads. "Not one whit of American autonomy may be given up to an international organization."

Think about that the next time you buy a pair of boots.

Kristin Kolb-Angelbeck

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WHAT THE MEDIA ISN'T TELLING YOU

About Bertelsmann's Hidden Nazi Past In an exposé trumpeted coast to coast, *The Nation* revealed that Bertelsmann - the largest book publisher in the U.S. - has carefully hidden its stalwart complicity with the Third Reich.

About the Secret History of Lead In an exhaustive special report, *The Nation* showed how General Motors, Standard Oil and Du Pont colluded to make and market gasoline containing lead - a deadly poison - although there were safe alternatives. Abetted by the US government, they suppressed scientific evidence that lead kills. Still sold in countries all over the world, leaded gasoline continues to poison the planet.

About *The Wall Street Journal* Contrary to its self-assessment as "the world's most important publication," Gore Vidal noted for *The Nation* "just how unknown this cheery neofascist paper is to the majority of Americans."



is only in The Nation.

About The Battle in Seattle. "Seattle was indeed a milestone of a new kind of politics. Labor shed its nationalism for a new rhetoric of internationalism and solidarity. Progressives replaced their apologetic demeanor of the past twenty years with confidence, style and wit."

About The Battle Beyond Seattle. As William Greider put it in his debut as *The Nation*'s national affairs correspondent, "Arrogance designed the WTO; arrogance will doubtless defend it. In the meantime, the WTO can serve as a splendid rallying point for popular resistance."

About The F.B.I. An intensive investigation for *The Nation* turned up everything from slovenly casework to massively skewed priorities. Example: Number of convictions for health and safety violations against employees in a single year: one. Number of telephone taps: 1.3 million.

About Arts Funding As columnist Katha Pollitt wrote, "the right-wing attack on the National Endowment for the Arts is playing to a small, if ferocious, constituency. Contrary to stereotype, Americans *like* the arts, and the more access they have to them, the more they like them."

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On the Spot

By **Joel Bleifuss**

Bill Hillsman makes television campaign ads that make news. His 1990 ad for Paul Wellstone's Senate bid played off the idea that the Minnesota Democrat didn't have the cash to run an expensive media campaign. Wellstone was pictured talking really fast, to get as many ideas as possible into his expensive TV time slot. That ad won a Clio, the Oscar of the advertising industry.



Bill Hillsman

This year Hillsman, the CEO and chief creative officer of North Woods Advertising in Minneapolis, was back in the news with a spot for Ralph Nader that spoofed the series of Mastercard ads. Mastercard unsuccessfully tried to sue, the media picked up the story, and Jay Leno ran part of the ad on *The Tonight Show*. That exposure: priceless.

"The point of the Mastercard ad is that there are some things money can't buy," Hillsman says. "We felt it was ripe for parody because certainly politicians think that everything can be bought, and special interest groups believe anything can be bought. And here we have Ralph Nader, who is perhaps the one candidate who can't be bought, the one candidate who has actually done something for people in his life and who, despite his rhetorical flaws and his demeanor, is actually inspiring a group of people to vote for someone other than a 'Dimocrat' or a Republican."

A Chicago native and anti-war protester in the '60s, Hillsman grew disaffected with politics after George McGovern's defeat in 1972 and entered the world of advertising. In 1984, Hillsman's interest in politics returned when he noticed that the Reagan campaign had hired some of the most creative advertising minds in the nation. "The 'Morning Again In America' ad was much better and different than the usual claptrap," he says.

In 1990, Wellstone, then a political science professor at Carleton College, asked Hillsman, a Carleton graduate, to do the ads for his supposedly hopeless Senate campaign. "You're the only person I know in advertising," Wellstone told him. Hillsman's ads are credited with helping put Wellstone on the political map and in the Senate.

In 1998, Hillsman did the ads for Jesse "The Body" Ventura's successful campaign for Minnesota governor. And this fall he made commercials for Vermont's Democratic state auditor, Ed Flanagan, who is openly gay, in his Senate run. (He lost.)



"When I grow up, I want the government to have the same problems it has today," says this girl in Hillsman's commercial for Ralph Nader. The spot parodies a Monster.com ad campaign.

Hillsman says he only works for people he would vote for, and they are usually the candidates that don't have much money. "If you have an immense amount of money, it doesn't matter what a particular ad says since you will be inundating voters, droning your way into their consciousness," he explains. "If you have very little money, you have to find a way to break through, and television seems to be the shortest route to do that."

Hillsman says the trick is to have one good, powerful ad that speaks to people. He knows how to do that because he also specializes in product advertising. "We have a good sense of what is going on in people's minds," he says. "We are talking to consumers 365 days a year, and all voters are consumers."

This fall Hillsman deployed his skills as media advisor for the Alliance for Better Campaigns, which is lobbying television networks and stations to voluntarily provide five minutes during evening newscasts to "candidate-centered discourse" in the 30 days prior to all federal elections.

Reforms of the campaign finance system are something Hillsman supports both as good politics and good business. "If everybody was spending the same amount of money, we would win most of the time," he says. "We are doing things that are tremendously different than others who are practicing political communications. They keep spending more and more money on pretty ineffective commercials that bring out fewer and fewer voters every election cycle. The way things are done now is driving people out of the political process."

And that is no accident, he adds, since a politically engaged populace would upset the status quo. "I have been in some races where the party in office stood to benefit from lower voter turnout and did things to ensure lower voter turnout," he says. "If potato chip manufacturers advertised this way, there would be fewer and fewer people eating potato chips." ■

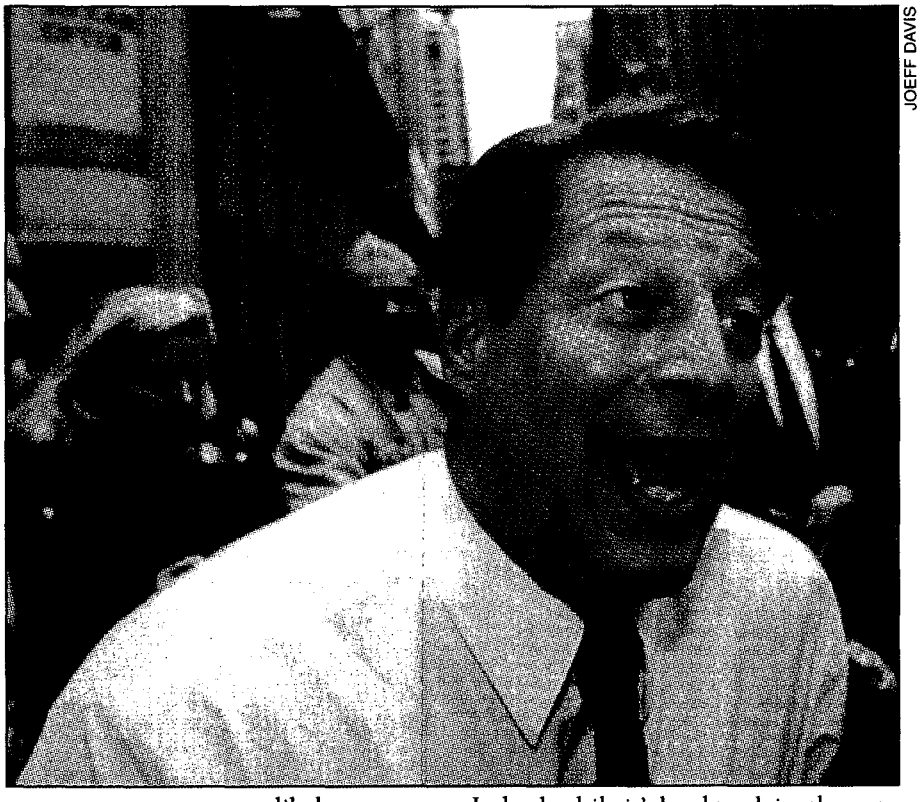
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Election 2000

The People's Choice

No matter who wins, voters won't get what they really want. Here's how progressives can break through the political stalemate.

By David Moberg



JOEFF DAVIS

When it's hard to determine who even won an election, it's tougher yet to figure out what the vote means. On the surface, the balloting for president and Congress reveals a nearly evenly divided electorate that may end up delivering the most uniformly Republican national government since the '50s. But voters appeared to want something different from what they are likely to get.

With Republicans remaining narrowly in control of both houses of Congress and the likelihood—at press time—of George W. Bush squeaking into the White House by dint of a tainted narrow margin in Florida, the prospects for progressive political gains in the next four years are extremely dim. Yet even if Al Gore were to win, there will be little chance for progress, just a hope that executive vetoes might occasionally join Senate filibusters as roadblocks to Republicans partially privatizing Social Security or dismantling federal agencies that protect workers.

But gridlock will not necessarily produce a stalemate. While some observers are already worrying that the new Congress may not accomplish much, a bigger worry over the coming years may be the pundits' favorite nostrum—"bipartisanship." The legitimacy of either man as president will undoubtedly remain in question, especially if Gore's popular vote majority holds up and Bush eventually ends up as the electoral college victor. After all, many Republicans never accepted Clinton as legitimate after two much clearer victories. Yet if Bush is in the White House, a bloc of conservative Democrats, already talking up cooperation, is likely to form a coalition with Republicans, thus dragging Democrats further to the right or provoking sharper conflict within the party. Under the cloak of bipartisanship and "compassionate conservatism," the congressional right would be well positioned to wreak havoc while claiming to enact reform.

There is good reason to believe, however, that Americans were not voting for the right-wing agenda that Republicans are likely to promote. Indeed, while it's hard to claim the vote is a mandate for much of anything, there are lots of indications that the center of gravity of American public opinion is moving away from right-wing hostility to government and toward a more positive view of government action.

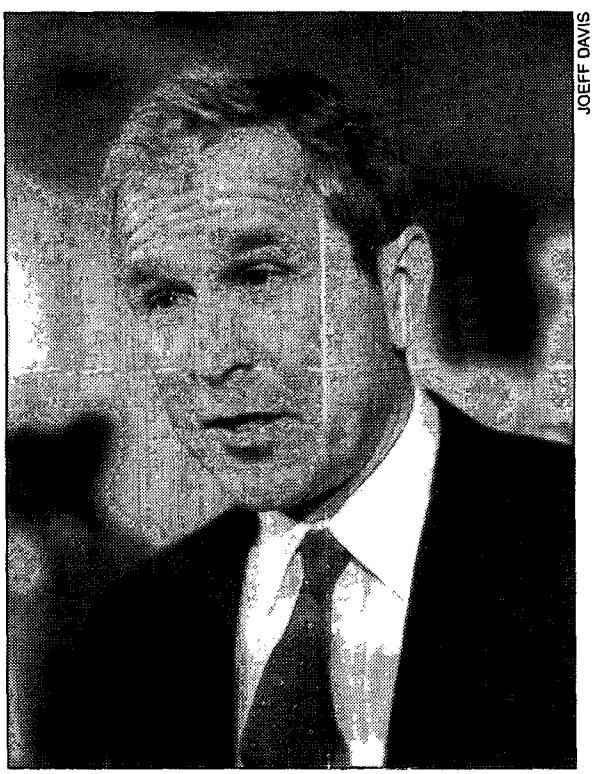
While there were many rumblings of discontent over a variety of issues, polls show that nearly two-thirds of the voters think the country is on the right track, and most give President Clinton at least some credit for the long period of economic growth and low unemployment. But along with the advantages of incumbency, this contributed to a vote for the status quo more than increased support for Democrats.

If there was any political direction to the vote, it was slightly skewed in a progressive direction. After all, Bush adopted a Clinton-like strategy for his party with his "compassionate conservatism." He attempted to occupy traditional

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Democratic terrain on issues such as education, Social Security and prescription drug coverage—but with proposals that promoted privatization of government. However, this reflected a recognition that there is a shift underway in public opinion away from the extreme anti-government politics of Gingrich or Reagan more than a real change in policy. Regardless of the merits of the Republican proposals, the very fact that Bush seemed to be addressing these issues helped to neutralize and confuse Democratic efforts to capitalize on their traditional strengths.

And despite Ralph Nader's vituperation against the vice president and the Democrats, it seems fair to say that Gore and Nader supporters shared more goals for government than they did with most Bush voters. Whatever Gore's own shortcomings, people who voted for him did so with the expectation that he would expand federal investment in education, broaden health care coverage, protect the environment and favor working people over the wealthy. Adding together the Nader and Gore votes, there was a clear, if slight, tilt in the vote toward progressive government.



JOEFF DAVIS

Exit polls and some state referenda votes also suggest that voters are looking for better government and more fairness, not less government and laissez-faire. For example, private school vouchers remain the heart of Republican education plans (though Bush avoided the term), but voters in California and Michigan strongly rejected ballot initiatives for vouchers. Also, although nearly 60 percent of voters surveyed by Stanley Greenberg for the Institute for America's Future favored individuals investing Social Security money in private accounts, only 37 percent supported such partial privatization when they realized it could raise the retirement age or lower benefits. The same survey showed that providing universal health care was one of voters' top priorities, far above cutting taxes (especially if told that nearly half of those cuts would go to the richest 1 percent).

But not everyone votes on the issues. About one third of voters ranked personal qualities above issues, and more than three-fifths of them voted for Bush. Many voters may not have strongly supported Bush's ideological views, but they simply found Gore untrustworthy or Bush more affable.

If there was no ideological majority for the right, the results don't add up as an overwhelming mandate for progressive government either. But they do raise the question of why Gore did so poorly as a candidate from an administration with high public approval presiding over peace and relative prosperity—and who was competing against an inexperienced, dim-witted, weak governor from a state with a dreadful record on the issues that people care about.

Gore clearly took the lead after the Democratic Convention with a populist message that tapped into the wellsprings of Democratic Party support, a claim to act for the little guy against the powerful and well-connected. Then Gore diluted and confused that message, especially in surprisingly weak debate performances that accentuated many of the personal qualities that people dislike about him. Yet when he returned to his populist message in the final weeks, he began rising in the polls as he picked up an unusually high percentage of voters who decided at the last minute.

Gore and his campaign strategists deserve the blame for his weak showing. Gore would have turned in an even more pathetic performance if it had not been for the unusually strong mobilization by labor and civil rights groups of the core Democratic faithful—African-Americans and union families. Although overall turnout was up only slightly from four years ago, 26 percent of voters were from union households, up from 23 percent; and 59 percent of them voted for Gore (37 percent for Bush and 3 percent for Nader), compared to 44 percent for Gore among nonunion households. Nine out of 10 African-American voters backed the vice president. Without that increased turnout by blacks and union members, Gore would not have even been in the tight contest at the end.

Many Gore backers have blamed Nader's campaign for their problems. After all, Nader got nearly 100,000 votes in Florida. Assuming, based on exit polls, that at least 40 percent of those people would have otherwise voted for Gore, Nader's success in Florida took away Bush's lead. The same case that Nader votes deprived Gore of victory could be made in New Hampshire.

However, the charge is misleading. Those votes wouldn't have gone to Nader if Gore and Clinton had not so badly betrayed both their promises and the expectations of many reliable Democrats. And Nader's votes don't explain Gore's embarrassing loss of states like Arkansas, Tennessee and West Virginia. Moreover, exit polls indicated that 11 percent of self-identified Democrats voted for Bush (compared to 8 percent of Republicans who supported Gore), but only 2 percent of Democrats voted for Nader. Judging from polling data, roughly half of earlier Nader supporters decided at the last minute to vote for Gore, thus keeping him in the race. It was the disloyalty of conservative Democrats more than abandonment by liberals that really hit Gore hard.

Nader backers are right when they argue that Gore is responsible for his own troubles. But without a doubt, if most of them had voted for Gore, he would be president. They had a choice, knowing that either Gore or Bush would

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be elected, and decided for a variety of reasons that voting for Nader was worth the risk of a Bush win. If Nader voters were consistent, they would not be trying to avoid responsibility for possibly defeating Gore; they would be boisterously patting themselves on the back for doing it. But it is likely that most Naderites would prefer Gore to Bush as president and don't completely believe the rhetoric that there is no difference, even though they're angry and disappointed with Gore and the Democrats.

The big danger now for progressives is that former allies will be set against each other. The labor movement has started to reach out more to citizen groups and allies on the left, but Gore's electoral difficulties risk souring relations and endangering the Seattle "Teamsters and Turtles" coalition. Nader's support was overwhelmingly white, and 90 percent of blacks backed Gore. Women supported Nader less than men did, but voted for Gore by the same 11-point margin by which men supported Bush.

None of this means Nader's policy ideas were wrong. Indeed, most progressive Democratic constituencies and their organizational leaders would probably agree with much of what he said. While Nader's articulation of those ideas was his campaign's most positive legacy, it is extremely unlikely that the Green Party (or rather either of the two Green Party constellations) can amount to anything significant politically with such little support among the major progressive constituencies—especially unions, African-Americans and other minorities, but also women and poor people. There is a desperate need for the kind of citizens movement that Nader says he wants to create, but there is little chance that the Green Party can become the vehicle for that movement (or even that many Nader voters have any intention of making the Green Party into something bigger).

Voters are looking for better government and more fairness, not less government and laissez-faire.

Indeed, there is the danger that the Green Party strategy of attacking the Democrats will undermine progressive political forces at a time when there seems to be a chance of rebuilding a popular movement critical of corporate power. There is always a need for gadfly groups to raise new or unpopular ideas, and citizen groups and leftists often need to mount fights over principle against political and governmental leaders, even when they're in a minority. But the left also needs a strategy to win majority support from the American people. That's the essence of democratic politics. It would be disastrous to revive old warfare between "radicals" and "liberals" over tactical issues, or to retreat into narrowly purist expressive politics, when there is the chance of progressives actually winning majority support for national health insurance, expanded financial aid for higher education, new controls over global corporations and public financing of elections.

Rather than indiscriminately attacking the Democratic Party as an institution, there is more to be gained by supporting progressives within the party and challenging conservative Democrats in primaries. In any case, progressives won't make any headway in winning elections as Democrats, Greens or anything else, without first winning public financing of elections and other electoral reforms (including provisions for proportional representation, instant runoff voting and other mechanisms that would give minority parties a meaningful chance).

More important, whether they supported Gore or Nader, progressives need to put aside any bitterness about electoral strategies and build organizations that can fight effectively on major national issues. After all, the real battle is with corporate power. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported, the drug lobby this year "waged the biggest and costliest corporate campaign in U.S. political history, spending more than $80 million to keep the Democrats from regaining control of Congress. And they won."

The movement against corporate globalization has demonstrated an ability to operate on many levels at once—winning widespread public support, mobilizing large institutional forces like labor unions and major environmental groups, engaging in effective legislative lobbying, taking advantage of intraparty ideological divisions, generating grassroots energy, and employing militant tactics in the street. So far there has been a tenuous success in keeping disparate strands and factions together and winning at least a few victories, despite overwhelming odds.

The same kind of mobilization for health care, the right to organize unions, campaign finance reform and global warming could transform politics by putting pressure on politicians, especially in the Democratic Party, and by educating the public, which is generally sympathetic to progressive solutions but open to corporate propaganda (as in the cases of prescription drug coverage and individual investment of Social Security funds). It is the job of progressives not just to criticize the shortcomings of politicians, whatever their party, but to create the social climate that forces politicians to act.

There is a chance now, if bickering and infighting on the left can be minimized, to mold an indeterminate but ultimately sympathetic public into a progressive political majority. These broad campaigns, carried on as much in between elections as during them, will be necessary to break through the political stalemate and win progressive victories, no matter who ends up in the White House. ■

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Spitting Distance

A congressional scorecard

By **Hans Johnson**

From throwback battles over teaching evolution to staring down their all-GOP delegation in Congress, Oklahoma progressives have had little to celebrate in recent years. But since November 7, some Tulsa-area activists have a spring in their step, thanks to Democrat Brad Carson's win in the 2nd Congressional District. A moderate and member of the nearby Cherokee Nation, Carson supports campaign finance reform and, most importantly, gives Sooner State liberals a likable face and sensible voice to respond to their concerns on Capitol Hill.

Carson's win, replacing anti-gay and anti-abortion standard-bearer Tom Coburn, comes as Democrats made gains in both chambers and inched closer to reclaiming the majority status that Republicans snatched from them in the 1994 elections. Buoyed by an upsurge in union household voters over 1996, Democrats gained at least three Senate seats and two House seats in the 107th Congress.

However, third-party challengers from the left apparently helped preserve a narrow, 11-member GOP edge in the House. Besides the venom aimed at presidential candidate Ralph Nader, some lefties are upset at the cast of spoilers who helped Dennis Hastert retain his speaker's gavel. A Green Party bid by Bonnie Bucqueroux cost Democrat Dianne Byrum a House seat in central Michigan. In New Mexico's 1st District, Democrat John Kelly lost to incumbent Heather Wilson by a margin just beyond the total nabbed by Green candidate Dan Kerlinsky. Fellow Green Jerry Coleman in New Jersey appears to have kept Democrat Maryanne Connelly out of Congress. And New Jersey Rep. Rush Holt is hoping a recount will put him over the top against former GOP Rep. Dick Zimmer, who saw Carl Mayer's Green challenge take away votes from the incumbent.

Some lefties are upset at the cast of spoilers who helped Dennis Hastert retain his speaker's gavel.

Other notable House outcomes include wins in California—by Hilda Solis, Susan Davis, Adam Schiff, Mike Honda, and the returning Jane Harman—as well as victories by Minnesota's Betty McCollum and Washington's Rick Larsen. Democrats also broke back into the Utah delegation with a win by Jim Matheson, who overcame appeals to anti-gay animus by the National Republican Campaign Committee to win a seat representing Salt Lake City. On Long Island, Steve Israel took the seat left open by Rick Lazio when he ran unsuccessfully for Senate.

In addition to Hillary Rodham Clinton's victory in New York, Senate winners applauded by progressives include Minnesota's Mark Dayton, Michigan's Debbie Stabenow and Florida's Bill Nelson. At press time, the race between Maria Cantwell and Slade Gorton, the GOP incumbent from Washington and nemesis to American Indian interests, still remained too close to call. But if Cantwell, who trails in the latest tallies, prevails, Democrats are relishing a 50-50 split in the new Senate.

Progressives can take heart that get-out-the-vote efforts headed by African Americans, Latinos and labor leaders more than offset Republicans' $100 million targeted turnout gambit called Victory 2000. Voters from union households accounted for 26 percent of the electorate, according to post-election briefings by the AFL-CIO, an increase from the 23 percent mark in the last general election. The high level of union participation reflects turnout drives that blended high-tech phonebanks with old-fashioned door-knocking. In a move that could add momentum to campaigns for a nationwide workers' holiday on Election Day, United Auto Workers members in Michigan enjoyed November 7 as a day off as a stipulation of their contracts. Born of collective bargaining, this small coup contributed to the 44 percent of the state's electorate who hailed from union households.

Democrats have maneuvered into spitting distance of a majority. But having lost their bid to retake Congress, the party may have lost some momentum on the Hill looking toward 2002, especially since some aging stalwarts could retire. If their would-be successors don't manage to dissuade third-party insurgents from fragmenting the progressive base on Election Day, Democrats dream of a majority may indeed be deferred. ■

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Election 2000

The Blame Game

Nader wasn't a traitor

By Doug Ireland

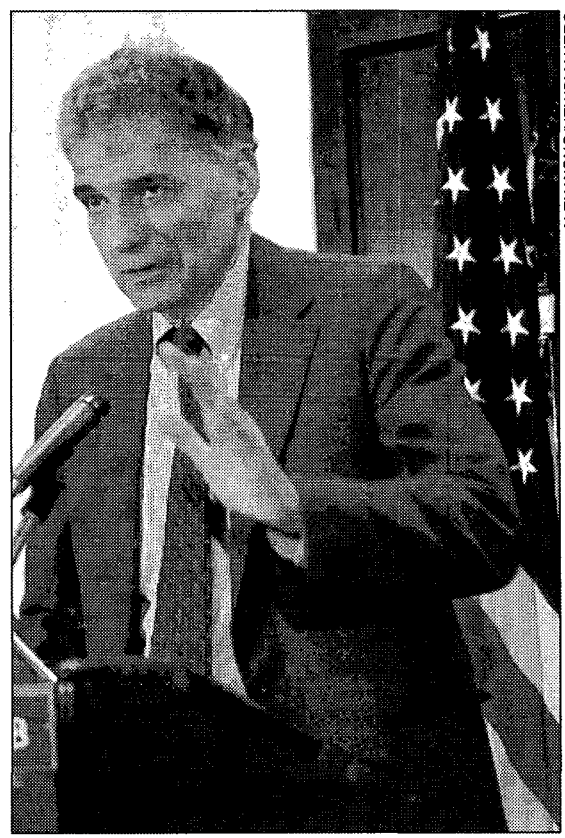
The hysterics among those Democratic liberals and party familiars among the blabbering classes who accuse Ralph Nader of creating a constitutional crisis are spouting nonsense. There is no constitutional crisis, only an election law dispute in one state. It appears that only in two states did Nader receive votes larger than Bush's margin of victory: New Hampshire (which would not have changed the electoral college outcome) and possibly Florida.

Nader did receive nearly 100,000 votes in the Sunshine State, but as he kept repeating during the campaign, only Al Gore could beat Al Gore. That's what happened in Florida. If Gore loses there, it's because he failed to carry the seniors, who were supposed to be the Democrats' firewall—exit polling shows that he split them evenly with Bush. Gore failed to achieve the substantial margin of victory he needed among seniors to win the state with the largest percentage of over-65ers because of his credibility problems. Too many different Gores—from the Gore of the mythical "lockbox" to the Gore who proclaimed himself the candidate of "smaller government"—showed up during the debates and the campaign for the older voters to take him at his rhetorical word. As one disgruntled Democrat put it: "I believe in everything Al Gore says—until he says it."

It was the triangulators running both the Gore and Bush campaigns who, in trying to steal the other's issues, further blurred the marginal differences between (in Nader's phrase) the "do-little party and the do-nothing party." (After the Los Angeles convention, Gore's handlers told him that, having solidified his base with populist rhetoric, he needed to move to the center; he did so—and sank in the polls.) That's what made this a close election. And if you're still looking for a different culprit, blame the Democrats who control Palm Beach County for adopting the idiotic and deceptive "butterfly ballot," which so confused older voters that some 19,000 ballots (more than enough to give Gore the state even before the recount) were thrown out by a judge because folks voted twice.

National exit poll totals indicate that only 40 percent of the nearly 2.7 million votes Nader received might have gone to Gore had the legendary consumer and workers' rights advocate not been on the ballot—20 percent would have voted for Bush, while more than 40 percent were new voters who otherwise wouldn't have bothered to vote. Turnout nationally appears to have ticked up only one percentage point over 1996—probably attributable to new Nader voters. (In Madison, Wisconsin, for example, Naderites registered 53,000 new voters.)

In some places, the Nader vote—much of it newly registered—probably helped down-ballot Democrats. Nader made a California campaign stop in Republican Rep. Brian Bilbray's district and denounced his environmental record, which may have made the difference in Democrat Susan Davis' eyelash-close victory. In Washington, if Maria Cantwell finally edges out a victory over Sen. Slade Gorton, it will likely be the new Nader voters who put her over the top.



ALEX WONG/NEWSMAKERS

It's not his fault that Al Gore beat himself.

The Greens generally avoided running candidates in swing districts. An exception was New Jersey, where running a full slate enhanced the party's ballot position. While Nader hardly campaigned there, local Green candidates still got more than 5,000 votes in two swing districts, making the difference in centrist Democrat Maryanne Connelly's loss in the 7th District, and forcing freshman Rep. Rush Holt into a recount. That should have the Democratic high command worried, for Nader is gearing up to run Green candidates in dozens of House districts.

Although he failed to achieve the 5 percent national threshold for Federal Election Commission recognition, Nader's great achievement was injecting a radical, *systemic* critique into the national discourse for the first time since such thinking was ostracized by the Cold War. And in the process, he mobilized and trained tens of thousands of younger, single-issue militants in electoral politics—despite the vicious attacks on him by the well-paid Stepford activists from the Washington-based issue lobbies umbilically tied to the Democrats and the Clinton White House.

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Whether Nader's troops can be integrated into the Greens is an open question, for the Green parties vary from state to state. Some, like the Greens in California, Texas, New Mexico and Connecticut, are models of openness and aggressive recruitment who have a well-grounded history of working with local issues activists and labor. But in New York, where the Greens split in two, the sectarian faction that controls the ballot line has put up roadblocks in the form of stringent membership requirements that keep the party membership small and controllable.

Don't blame Nader for the fact that the country couldn't make up its mind for either Gush or Bore.

Nader recognizes this problem: Although he ceaselessly promoted the Green Party on the campaign trail, he is not a party member himself, and won't become one. While he expects to exert considerable influence on the Greens, he's going to keep a staff of eight or so people and raise money for at least two new projects. One is a watchdog group that, as he told third-party expert Micah Sifry, would "have an investigator in each [congressional] district," publicizing voting records that coddle special interests and encouraging candidate recruitment. The second is a "People's Debate Commission" to counter the corporate-sponsored Commission on Presidential Debates that almost always locks out third-party candidates. Both of these projects could attract support from progressives who won't join the Greens.

A Gallup poll taken a week *after* the election showed that, when asked who'd make the best president, Americans were still divided at 44 percent for Gore and 44 percent for Bush. A *Washington Post* poll the next day showed a majority of voters said they "weren't worried" about the election. So don't blame Nader for the fact that the country couldn't make up its mind and has no overriding passion for either Gush or Bore.

What the tawdry maneuverings in Florida mean is that for the foreseeable future all the oxygen will be sucked out of the real debate over power—corrupting big money in politics—as we are endlessly enmeshed in a secondary debate over process. But Nader won't be going away, and he will work to bring our attention back to the structural issues. That's healthy for progressive politics, both inside and outside the Democratic Party. ■

Party On!

State third parties provide election-night excitement of their own

By **John Nichols**

As he stepped up to a makeshift podium at a restaurant not far from the Vermont State Capitol, Progressive Party gubernatorial candidate Anthony Pollina sure looked like an Election Night winner. His supporters cheered wildly. Pollina waved them quiet and then declared, "What we're seeing here is the beginning of a very, very successful Progressive Party."

At a moment when many on the left are re-examining their attitude toward third parties following Ralph Nader's controversial Green Party run—which has been frequently condemned for drawing votes away from Al Gore's Democrats—scrappy new progressive parties continue to offer exciting illustrations of what can be done at the state and local levels.

In its first official foray into the political big-time, the Vermont Progressive Party—which advocates development of a single-payer health care plan, living-wage jobs, protections for family farmers and other programs designed to aid working families—earned high marks: not just the 10 percent of the vote for Pollina, but acclaim from the media and even other candidates. "I was the candidate who they said won the debates," explains 48-year-old Pollina. "I was the candidate who stuck to the issues. I was the candidate who changed people's minds."

Add in several legislative seat victories and the whopping 17 percent tallied by state treasurer candidate Claude DeLucia, and the group's effort to crack the two-party system was looking solid. It was all the more impressive that the breakthrough came amidst fears about a right-wing, anti-gay challenge to Democratic Gov. Howard Dean—which led many Pollina backers to abandon his candidacy at the last minute. Even with the slippage, the Progressive Party won "major-party" status along with the Democrats and Republicans. Critically, Pollina held onto the support he had won from independent Rep. Bernie Sanders and the 2,000-member Vermont branch of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union (UE).

UE also provided Nader with critical backing nationally, as did the California Nurses Association and union locals around the country. While few Green candidates for major offices rivaled that level of support, California Senate candidate Medea Benjamin put together an impressive list of union supporters, including several public employee unions, a long list of union leaders, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* and the *L.A. Weekly* and, on Election Day, 300,000 voters.

A similarly broad coalition came together on behalf of New York's Working Families Party. Under New York election laws that allow the fusion of votes for different parties into a single vote total for a candidate, the Working Families Party actively campaigned for progressive voters to cast their ballots for Gore and Senate candidate Hillary Clinton on the new party's line—as a way of nudging the candidates to the left. Some unexpected public figures signed onto the strategy. "It won't come as much surprise

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that as a Democratic elected official, I'm supporting Al Gore and Hillary Clinton this year," Rep. Nydia Velazquez announced just before the election. "But what might surprise you is that I'm encouraging my friends *not* to vote for them on the Democratic Party line."

Roughly 100,000 voters cast ballots for Gore and Clinton on the Working Families line, making the party the second-largest of the state's eight "minor" parties. The party also helped elect Suffolk County's Pat Eddington to the state legislature with a combination of Democratic and Working Families votes. "Progressive Democrats like our approach," says Working Families organizer Dan Cantor, comparing his group's strategy to the Green Party's direct challenges. "It helps them push their party in the direction they want it to go, without destroying their chances of actually winning a place at the table." ■

Bush's Unreported Contingency Plan

By Joel Bleifuss

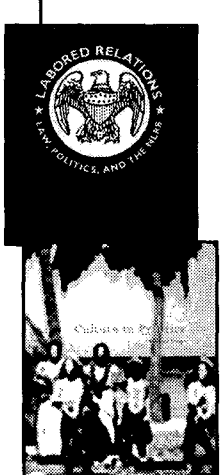
In all the reporting of this ballot-by-ballot struggle for the presidency, some stories have gotten lost.

A week before the election, Michael Kramer of New York *Daily News* reported the that Bush campaign had drawn up a plan to contest the election should George W. Bush win the popular vote and Al Gore capture the electoral college. A Bush aide told Kramer: "The one thing we don't do is roll over. We fight."

The campaign's strategy, according to the aide, was to mount a massive public relations offensive that would stress the unfairness of the electoral college, target the nation's talk radio shows, enlist local businessmen to lobby their customers, and ask conservative ministers to speak to their flocks. "We'd have ads too," the Bush aide told Kramer, "and I think you can count on the media to fuel the thing big-time. Even papers that supported Gore might turn against him because the will of he people will have been thwarted."

With Gore the winner of the popular vote, there has been some talk of doing away with the electoral college, but the media certainly have not made it a burning issue. How often have you seen a network anchorman question Bush campaign spokesmen on their losing the popular vote? Though he has had the opportunity, Ted Koppel has yet to bring it up on *Nightline*. Similarly, though *Nightline* has devoted every newscast since the election to the Florida ballot controversy, neither Koppel nor any of the show's reporters ever has mentioned that Secretary of State Katherine Harris is also the co-chairwoman of the Bush campaign in Florida. ■

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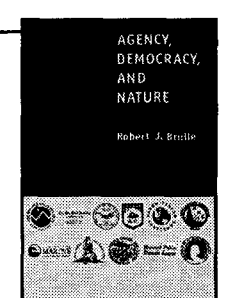
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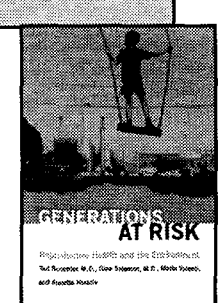
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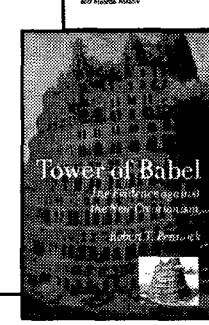
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A Silver Lining

In the streets, they're up in arms

By Laura Flanders

You know who didn't win the election. Do you want to know who won? The winners were the folks in the streets all year who called for "no more business as usual." As the politicians duel over counts and court orders, and go tit-for-tat on TV, no one could say this was "usual."

Consider the scene behind the tired-looking TV reporters in Florida. On November 8, African-Americans, Haitians, Central Americans, Jews, labor unionists, students and seniors rallied for voter justice with hand-lettered, not Democratic Party-printed, signs. In predominantly black and Jewish West Palm Beach, the idea that "butterfly" ballots might have thrown their votes to Pat Buchanan brought people out, if not in hives, then certainly in droves.

At the New Birth Baptist Church in Miami on November 9, an overflow crowd packed the pews and then spilled into a nearby school hall, connected to the congregation via large video screens. In a letter to friends, Catholic activist Mari Castellanos described the scene: "It felt like Birmingham. People sang and prayed and listened. Story after story was told of people being turned away at the polls, of ballots being allegedly destroyed, of NAACP election literature being allegedly discarded at the main post office, of Spanish-speaking poll workers being sent to Creole precincts and vice-versa."

Among the speakers were union leaders, civil rights activists, black elected officials, ministers and rabbis. Each, Castellanos reports, recalled "the price their communities had paid for the right to vote and vowed not to be disenfranchised ever again."

On November 12, in Miami's Temple Israel synagogue, local rabbis and other Jewish leaders shared the pulpit with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume and Ralph Neas of People for the American Way. They announced their shared intent to ask for a federal investigation of possible violations of the Voting Rights Act. "I hadn't seen anything like it for as long as I can remember," says Mandy Carter, who's no stranger to nasty electoral politics—she once ran Harvey Gantt's campaign against Jesse Helms.

In a joint letter sent to Attorney General Janet Reno on November 14, the NAACP and Congressional Black Caucus listed what they said were 11 specific types of discrimination directed at minorities. Their charges included one case of a voter, who had never been arrested, being denied the right to vote after being told he had a prior felony conviction. (Roughly half a million free Florida ex-convicts are currently disenfranchised under the state's 1868 election law.) In another incident, election officials failed to notify voters in a predominantly African-American precinct that their usual polling place—a school—had been demolished. They also failed to direct voters by signs or other means to the proper site. In addition, the letter cited reports from the Orlando area that 200 Puerto Rican voters in Orange County were denied the right to vote because they could only produce one piece of identification (they were asked for two) or were unable to understand the ballots (the county failed to produce Spanish language ballots or interpreters, despite a legal requirement to do so).

People with disabilities also joined the fray. According to Teri Mosier, a deaf civil rights lawyer, people have long complained that the polling booths in West Palm Beach are inaccessible. "If you were a person in a wheelchair, you could not see the ballot," Mosier says. "You had to run your finger down and count the number of holes. Hole No. 2 was supposed to be Al Gore, but instead you voted for Buchanan."

People with disabilities make up 20 percent of the voters in West Palm Beach, Mosier says, and they had particular incentive to go to the polls this year. "The Americans with Disabilities Act is already up for review in the Supreme Court, and our lives depend on one vote."



COLIN BRALEY/REUTERS

This isn't politics as usual.

The Bush and Gore teams pontificate about the popular will, but even with $4 billion spent to doll them up, neither came anywhere close to "popular." The storm in the Sunshine State is between the one who persuaded just 24.931 percent of the nation's eligible voters to vote for him and the other who attracted 24.932 percent.

The presidency matters, but a much more important outcome of this tussle would be a movement to repopularize politics. Al Gore won't drive corruption out of the election process (though he's the preferred candidate of these protesters). Nor will an anti-corporate Nader campaign that's nowhere to be seen when a multiracial justice movement hits the streets. The good news is that the coalitions on display in Florida end the year as we began it, with reason to hope for something new. After all, some say the new millennium actually starts next year. ■

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Election 2000

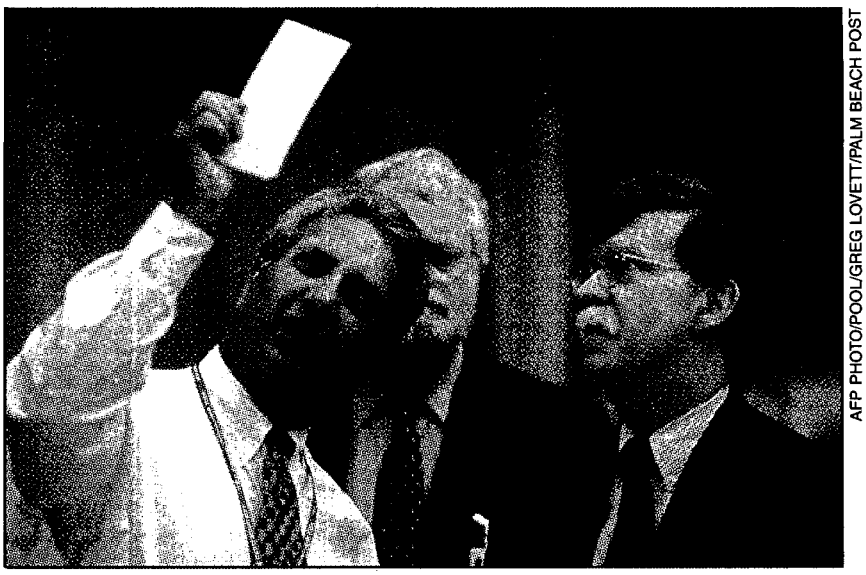
The Real Spoiler

It's time to reform the electoral system

By Steven Hill and Rob Richie

The equivocal showing of Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader—falling far short of the 5 percent threshold for federal funds and winning enough votes in Florida to send the election into turmoil—poses hard questions about a post-election strategy for a progressive electoral movement, particularly with Nader hinting at more spoilers to come from a nascent Green Party that he promises to keep building.

On the positive side, Nader was on the ballot in 45 states, raised more than $7 million, drew national attention to the progressive critique of the Clinton-Gore administration and inspired tens of thousands of enthusiasts in rallies in cities across the country. But ultimately, under the pressures of the spoiler dilemma posed by our winner-take-all system, Nader's support drained away on Election Day. The *Washington Post* estimated that more than 5 million would-be Nader supporters voted for a major party candidate after wrestling with the spoiler dilemma.



AFP PHOTO/POOL/GREG LOVETT/PALM BEACH POST

Is this what democracy looks like?

In reflecting on the Nader campaign, it could not be more obvious that there is one overriding obstacle to third-party candidacies: our winner-take-all voting practices that preserve the two-party political system. Voting system reform in the form of proportional representation for legislative elections and instant runoff voting (IRV) for executive elections must be a cornerstone of the movement to restore electoral democracy.

Given progressives' frustration with the rightward tilt of Clinton-Gore, the very debate about Nader's candidacy revealed a serious flaw in our antiquated voting practices: Voting for your favorite candidate can lead to the election of your *least favorite* candidate.

Fortunately Australia, England and Ireland have implemented IRV. These nations share our tradition of electing candidates by plurality (where the top vote-getter wins, even with less than a majority) but now use IRV for most important elections. Mary Robinson was elected president of Ireland by IRV, and Labor Party maverick "Red Ken" Livingstone was elected mayor of London. The Australian legislature has been elected by IRV for decades.

Here's how IRV works: At the polls, voters select their favorite candidate, but also indicate on the same ballot their second runoff choice and subsequent runoff choices. If a candidate receives a majority of first choices, the election is over. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and in the runoff round each ballot counts for the top-ranked candidate still in the race. Rounds of counting continue until there is a majority winner. It's like a runoff election, but without voters needing to return to the polls.

Imagine this year's presidential race with IRV: In July, Nader surged to nearly 10 percent in national polls. He drew interest from the United Auto Workers, Teamsters and leading environmental organizations. Recognizing the spoiler problem, however, they and many progressive constituencies grudgingly endorsed Gore. But with IRV, Nader would not have worn the spoiler tag, and could have mobilized a progressive constituency and even gained access to the presidential debates. Progressives in Florida and elsewhere could have ranked Nader as their first choice and Gore as their backup runoff choice. Instead of waking up on November 8 with an electoral hangover, they might have discovered that their runoff choice had boosted Gore to victory—but with a caveat that said: "Handle with care. Watch your step on trade, political reform and environmental policies."

The increased support for Nader and attention to progressive issues could have shifted the political center and helped Democrats win those few extra seats necessary to retake Congress. Rather than fracture a potential majority vote for one party, IRV could have helped forge that majority through mobilizing and informing new voters. The energies of young activists, some of whose belief in electoral politics no doubt has been shaken by Nader's weak showing, would have been hugely rewarded.

Once passions subside after this presidential election, progressive Democrats and Green Party activists need to think seriously about forging alliances to usher in electoral reform. In all 50 states, IRV could be implemented right now for all federal elections, including the presidential race, as well as state

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and local elections, without changing a single federal law or amending the Constitution. Already, IRV is gaining support in various states, particularly when it solves a problem for a major party—as in New Mexico, where the Greens have siphoned votes from the Democrats. Advocates in Alaska—including leading Republicans—have turned in the requisite signatures to place IRV on the 2002 statewide ballot. Vermont also holds promise, with an impressive coalition supporting IRV for statewide elections. And there are a growing number of opportunities for city and state campaigns for IRV. In other words, progressive Democrats and Green Party activists should be exploring ways to work together to enact voting system reform.

But to gain a real foothold in power, IRV is not enough. Fair representation demands scrapping winner-take-all rules in legislative races in favor of proportional representation, as used in most established democracies. With proportional representation, a political party winning 10 percent of the popular vote wins 10 percent of the legislative seats—instead of nothing. Representing more of us would break open political monopolies and give political and racial minorities realistic chances to win their fair share all across the country. With proportional representation, the fight for control of the House of Representatives this year would have been a national election, rather than the piecemeal, money-driven campaign that took place in 20 or 30 swing districts.

Other political reforms, notably public financing of elections and fair ballot-access laws, are of critical importance to making democracy work. But these other reforms cannot address the spoiler dilemma, and they can't change the fact that winner-take-all elections shut out political and racial minorities, since representation is limited to those candidates and parties able to portray themselves as being all things to approximately half the voters. Only voting system reform will fundamentally level the playing field.

The power of IRV and proportional representation have dawned on many Nader backers, particularly younger activists and Greens who could be the backbone of a progressive electoral movement. Nader himself backs IRV and proportional representation, but seems confused about their fundamental importance to multiparty democracy. Bewilderingly, he continues to tout a "None of The Above" voting option, which does little to build a multiparty system. That raises crucial questions: Will a Nader-led electoral movement ignore the real barriers presented by winner-take-all? Or will it use its modest clout and resources to work for multiparty democracy founded on the bedrock of proportional representation for legislative elections and instant runoff voting for executive races?

The Nader candidacy showed a glimpse of the power of a lasting multiparty politics. But its limitations illuminate the critical need to reform winner-take-all elections. The recent election results clarify, once and for all, the direction a progressive electoral movement must take. Let's start the legwork necessary to liberate voters from a choice between "spoilers" and "lesser evils."

It's time to change the voting system that spoils the game for all of us. ■

Steven Hill *and* **Rob Richie** *of the Center for Voting and Democracy (www.fairvote.org) are co-authors of* Reflecting All of Us *(Beacon Press).*

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Election 2000

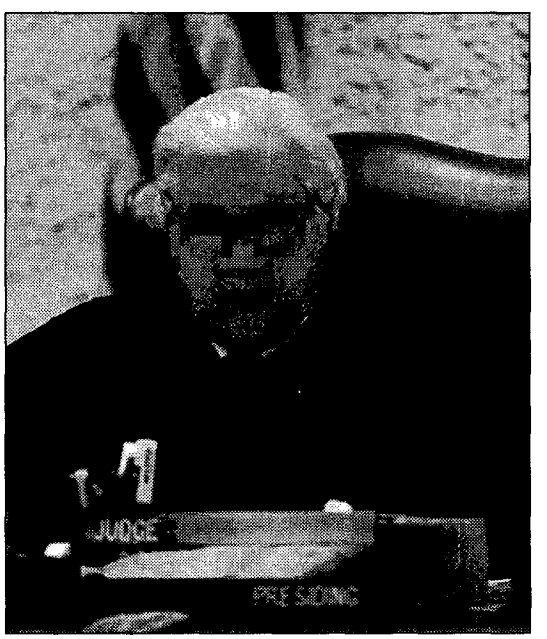
Attacking the Bench

Following the money in judicial elections

By Joanne Doroshow and Stephen C. Halpern

The nature of judicial elections in this country is fundamentally changing. Never before has so much corporate money been dumped into the states for the purpose of ensuring the election of pro-industry judges and defeating judges who have voted to strike down tort reforms—laws that limit or immunize corporations from liability and make it more difficult or impossible for injured consumers to go to court.

This election season, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce spent an unprecedented $1 million in an advertising blitz sponsored by the Institute for Legal Reform—the Chamber's tort reform wing. Jim Wootton, head of the Institute, says the Chamber specifically targeted states where judges may be called upon to rule on the constitutionality of tort restrictions.



For the Chamber, the results were mixed. Initial problems for the group emerged even before Election Day, when a Mississippi federal court agreed with state officials that the Chamber's failure to file campaign finance reports for its "issue ads" violated election laws. Two of the Chamber's four endorsed judicial candidates were re-elected. But another—the state chief justice—was defeated, while the fourth faces a runoff election.

Nowhere did the corporate money flow more heavily than into Ohio, where the Ohio Chamber, U.S. Chamber and other business interests spent millions trying to oust Supreme Court Justice Alice Robie Resnick. Businesses disliked Resnick's 1999 decision declaring Ohio's draconian 1996 tort-reform law unconstitutional. In a major defeat for the Chamber, Resnick was re-elected.

In other states, like Alabama, Michigan and Indiana, Chamber-endorsed candidates won. Despite a few losses, the Chamber's Wootton calls the overall effort a "success," promising in future years to increase the "commitment" to electing judges the Chamber likes and ousting those it doesn't. In fact, the Chamber doesn't need to actually win a judicial race to have an impact—the threat of a Chamber-funded, big-money opponent could be enough to make judges think twice before deciding difficult cases.

Eighty-seven percent of state judges in the country—in 42 states—must compete in elections at some point in their careers, either in retention votes or against opposing judicial candidates. That these elections are now becoming as nasty, partisan and expensive as other races could have severe repercussions for our democracy.

From our nation's beginning, the independence of judges has been a source of national concern. When the colonists separated from England, they cited King George's attempts to restrict the independence of judges as one of a long list of offenses enumerated in the Declaration of Independence. To "judge" anything—whether it is a ball game, karaoke contest or lawsuit—requires that the person doing the judging be neutral and objective. That, in turn, requires that judges be free from fear that decisions they make might jeopardize their tenure in office.

Indeed, the integrity and legitimacy of the judging process hinges on the assumption that judges will render decisions based on the "merits" of a case, and not on how a decision may affect the judge's personal or professional future. Judges who must look over their shoulder to calculate how their decisions might play with certain individuals or groups in the community cannot fulfill the basic role we expect of a judge.

When groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce fund judicial attack ads and orchestrate campaigns against judges because of decisions they have rendered, the very foundations of our judicial systems are threatened. With money and politics already dominating the executive and legislative branches, independent judges and jurors represent a much-needed counterweight to the dominance of organized moneyed interests in the political branches of our government. We are right to expect that judicial decision-making will be apolitical. Accordingly, throughout much of our history, we have struggled to keep those who ascend to the bench insulated from political attack and reprisal by those who are dissatisfied with their decisions.

Unfortunately, with the Chamber's orchestrated spending against judicial candidates, this tradition, which has served and protected us so well for more than 200 years, is threatened. ■

Joanne Doroshow *is executive director of the Center for Justice and Democracy.* **Stephen C. Halpern** *teaches political science at the State University of New York at Buffalo.* *A version of this article originally appeared in the online journal* TomPaine.com.

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Just Vote No

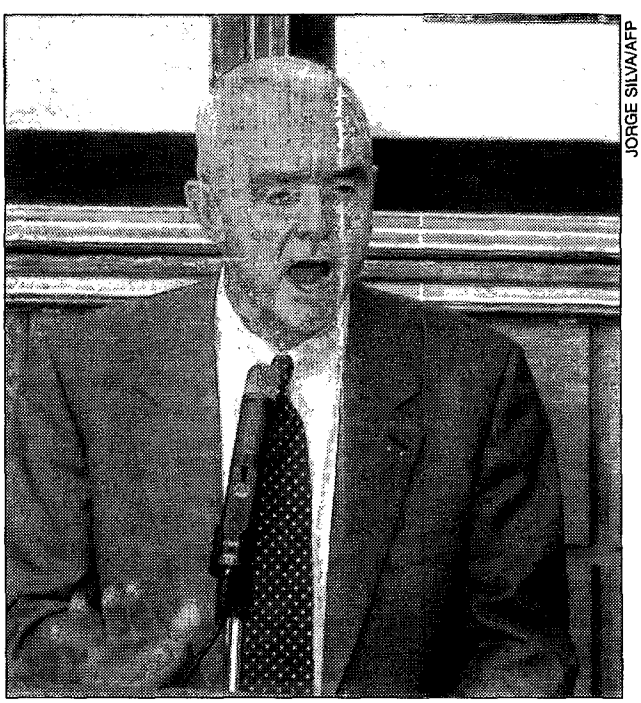
The war on drugs loses at the polls

By **Salim Muwakkil**

The results of the presidential vote may hang in limbo, but there seems to be little doubt that voters are ready to retreat from this nation's war on drugs. On November 7 there were drug policy issues on the ballots of seven states, and voters opted to reform drug laws in five of them. More and more Americans are concluding that the drug war has been a colossal failure; rather than curb drug abuse, it has fueled a murderous underground economy, corroded the civil liberties of all U.S. citizens, and transformed the world's leading democracy into the world's leading jailer.

The Lindesmith Center Drug Policy Foundation, which is funded by financier George Soros, joined with the Campaign for New Drug Polices to co-sponsor ballot measures in California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon and Utah this fall. (Voters in Alaska defeated an initiative calling for the legalization of marijuana, which the groups did not sponsor.)

Their biggest victory was in California, where voters passed Proposition 36, a measure that will require treatment instead of jail for those arrested for drug possession or use. The initiative, which passed by a 61 to 39 percent margin, also provides treatment instead of a return to prison for parolees who test positive for drugs. Prop 36 allocates $120 million a year to pay for expanded drug treatment, supplemented by job and literacy training and family counseling. "We won a very significant and hopefully trend-setting victory in California," says Bill Zimmerman, executive director of the Campaign for New Drug Policies. "I think Proposition 36 will teach elected officials that voters want drug policies that are safer, cheaper, smarter and more effective."



JORGE SILVA/AFP

Voters rebuked drug warriors like Gen. Barry McCaffrey.

Arizona voters passed a similar proposition four years ago, requiring drug treatment rather than jail for first-time drug offenders. According to a recent report by the Arizona Supreme Court, the policy has been a success. But since California has the highest incarceration rate for drug use in the nation, and is often seen as a bellwether for national trends, the state's voters may have given a nudge to others who bemoaned the disastrous consequences of the drug war, but were intimidated from speaking out by drug war propaganda.

Since California voters first approved of medical marijuana in 1996, seven other states have followed suit. In this election, Nevada and Colorado voters passed initiatives to make marijuana legal for medical use upon the recommendation of a physician. Residents with certain illnesses will be eligible for credentials that permit them to possess or cultivate marijuana for their own use.

When California passed its medical marijuana initiative, Gen. Barry McCaffrey, the outgoing czar of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and other officials of the Clinton administration threatened to take away the license of any doctor who dared to recommend marijuana for their patients. But the Lindesmith Center and the ACLU joined several physicians in a lawsuit against McCaffrey's office for violating their First Amendment rights. The plaintiffs recently won a ruling that enjoined the federal government from taking any action.

Other states where medical marijuana measures have passed are quietly adjusting to the provisions of the initiatives. "These laws are on the books and they're working," Zimmerman says. "Medical patients are using marijuana with impunity."

Meanwhile, in a major blow to the drug warriors, voters in Oregon and Utah decided to end the practice that allows law enforcement agencies to seize and sell the assets of drug crime suspects. Without any proof of guilt, police in most states can confiscate the property of any drug suspect and profit from the proceeds of selling it. This provides a perverse incentive for police to pursue drug cases. Ethan Nadelman, executive director of the Lindesmith Center, says it's no coincidence that the number of drug arrests keeps increasing. "They are double what they were in the '80s, because policy priorities have shifted in inappropriate ways to target drug offenders," he notes. "Why? Unfortunately, because that's where the money is."

Property may still be seized with probable cause in Oregon and Utah. However, the proceeds of the forfeitures

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will now go into new education or drug treatment funds instead of into the pockets of law enforcement agencies. In Oregon, the measure passed with 66 percent of the vote, and in Utah the margin of victory was 69 percent to 31 percent. "The measures passed with such wide majorities because they united people across the policy spectrum," Zimmerman says, pointing out that Utah is one of the most conservative states in the country. "Liberals interested in defending human rights were united with conservatives interested in protecting property rights, and both groups felt their rights were being violated by the current asset-forfeiture laws. It was a right-left coalition."

The news for drug war opponents wasn't so good in Massachusetts, where voters defeated an initiative that would have reformed the system of property seizures and provided treatment instead of jail for low-level, nonviolent drug offenders. Zimmerman blames the loss on the measure's offer of treatment to low-level drug dealers as well as users. "Sympathy may be growing for drug users," he says, "but that sympathy does not extend to drug dealers."

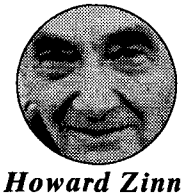
But Nadelman points out that, since 1996, 17 out of 19 initiatives and referendums have passed around the country in favor of drug policy reform. "But in the past year," he adds, "there have been more victories in state legislatures for drug policy reform than in the past 25 years put together."

This year Hawaii became the first state to approve medical marijuana through the legislative process; and along with the North Dakota legislature, Hawaii decided to legalize the cultivation of industrial hemp. The Vermont legislature established a methadone treatment program for heroin addicts. New York, New Hampshire and Rhode Island all passed pivotal legislation to make sterile needles more available to addicts to help stem the still-raging AIDS pandemic.

"For too long drug policies have been driven by a combination of ignorance, fear, prejudice and profit."

What's more, black leadership finally is jumping on the bandwagon. The Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rep. Charles Rangel (D-New York) once led the charge for the drug war, but now complain about how punitive drug policies fuel the racial imbalances of the "corrections-industrial complex." Reps. Maxine Waters (D-California) and John Conyers (D-Michigan) also have added their voices to the growing chorus. Even Republicans like New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson and Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson have become consistent critics of drug war tactics. Johnson has gone so far as to argue that marijuana should be legalized.

"Those political victories are part of a broader strategy to promote more sensible drug policies," Nadelman says. "For too long drug policies have been driven by a combination of ignorance, fear, prejudice and profit. We want policy based on common sense, science, public health and human rights." ■


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Measure for Measure

Voters weigh in on ballot initiatives

By **Hans Johnson**

Surveying the cast of candidates who won on November 7 is still muddled since so many victorious candidates emerged from multiparty contests with no clear mandate for action. Thus the search for voters' messages to policy-makers now centers on official tallies from binding referenda in several states. Besides a boost for drug-law reformers and educators, this fall's bounty of up-or-down ballot questions yields few unequivocal signals—or wins—for progressives. The results did, however, deal several major setbacks to conservatives.

In Oregon, where voters confronted 26 statewide referenda in the state's first mail-in general election, anti-tax activist Bill Sizemore lost all six of his pet ballot proposals, including two aimed at crippling labor unions. In its fourth attempt to write homophobia into state law, the Oregon Citizens Alliance failed to pass Measure 9, which would have slashed funding to public schools where teachers mention gay people in anything but negative terms.

While rejoicing at the rejection of the Sizemore-backed "paycheck protection" questions, unions also cheered the approval of Measure 99, which opened the door to collective bargaining by home health care workers in the state, many of whom receive low wages and no health insurance.

But Oregonians took a dim view of an ambitious drive to reform campaign finance. They rejected Measure 6, passage of which would have ushered in public funding and spending caps for candidates for state office. A similar measure in Missouri also failed. In California, however, voters approved Proposition 34 by a 3-to-2 margin, giving a resounding go-ahead to modest limits on campaign contributions to candidates for state offices. (California voters also continued the process of undoing the damage of 1978's infamous anti-tax Proposition 13 by lowering the threshold for passage of local school bonds from two-thirds to 55 percent.)

Perhaps the biggest winners in the slew of ballot-measure outcomes were teachers, who stomped statewide voucher proposals in both California and Michigan. Led by Gale Kaufman, the same Golden State consultant who helped sink a notorious anti-union initiative in 1998, the campaign against this year's pro-voucher Prop 38 racked up an impressive 71 percent "no" vote. In Michigan, the reluctance of local conservatives like Gov. John Engler to back Proposal 1 left only out-of-state pols like John McCain to herald the voucher scheme. The measure failed by more than 2-to-1, a margin padded by the 44 percent share of the state electorate that came from union households.

Voters in Alabama removed a constitutional ban on interracial marriage. Proposals aimed at barring the use of certain animal traps and poisons faced mixed verdicts, passing in Washington but losing in Oregon. Anti-sprawl measures failed in both Arizona and Colorado. Background checks on firearms purchases at gun shows won sweeping approval in both Colorado and Oregon. Also in the Rocky Mountain State, voters rejected a mandatory "informed consent" measure aimed at dissuading women from having abortions. The loss, by a whopping 3-to-2 margin, dealt another blow to Focus on the Family, the religious-right powerhouse that also failed to stop the state's medical marijuana measure.



SPENCER PLATT/NEWSMAKERS

This year's bounty of ballot measures yielded few big wins for progressives.

Still, progressives faced some significant setbacks in ballot questions. By razor-thin majorities, Maine voters rejected both physician-assisted suicide and yet another referendum aimed at extending nondiscrimination protections to gay people in the state. In both Nevada and Nebraska, measures to ban same-sex marriage drew 70 percent approval; the Nebraska ban also encompasses domestic partnerships, the first such prohibition by any state. Finally, just two years before Utah hosts the Winter Olympics, two-thirds of voters in the state yanked a welcome mat from under their Latino neighbors by approving a measure making English the official language. All government business will now be conducted in English only. ■

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Every Rose Has Its Thorn

Louis Farrakhan's new tune is making many African-Americans anxious



ALEX WONG/NEWSMAKERS

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan at October's Million Family March.

By Salim Muwakkil

When Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan announced last December that he was moving away from the racial focus that once defined his mission, he provoked a minor earthquake in the black community. At a press conference held at the group's main mosque, Farrakhan said a "near death" experience resulting from prostate cancer treatment caused him to refocus his views on uplifting "fallen humanity regardless of their race, color or creed."

His brush with death may have hastened his move away from the eugenic theology that underlies Nation of Islam doctrine, but he had been taking small steps away from the group's founding dogma for many years. Even before the success of the 1995 Million Man March, Farrakhan had been angling for an opportunity to jettison the most flagrantly racist elements of Nation of Islam doctrine (whites are a genetically evil race, while blacks are inherently divine) without alienating those who gain comfort or catharsis from that cartoonish catechism.

But while Farrakhan's move toward the mainstream may be heartening to his erstwhile critics, it's causing considerable anxiety among many African-Americans. Since Malcolm X gave the Nation a national identity in the early '50s, the group has distinguished itself as an organization irrevocably dedicated to the cause of the race. Other African-American organizations may have adopted aspects of black nationalist ideology or mouthed slogans of self-reliance, but for Elijah Muhammad's Nation, "blackness" was not just a racial identity, it was an ontological principle.

The Nation of Islam was a hard sell for most African-Americans. The ascetic behavior code, the need for sartorial and intellectual conformity and the rigorous diet were too demanding for most, but the group earned street-level credibility through its success in reaching those deemed unreachable. The public arrival of Malcolm X upped the group's profile and influenced the future direction of the black liberation movement. He gave impetus to the cultural nationalist movement with his rhetorical embrace of African culture; he also nurtured the "revolutionary" nationalist movement (like the Black Panther Party) by focusing on anti-colonial struggles in the Third World. In his later years, he helped boost support for socialism even as he increased the visibility of orthodox Islam in the black community. Although Malcolm X's later fame came after his public and rancorous estrangement from the Nation, his wide influence placed the group at the heart of the discourse surrounding the black freedom movement.

Farrakhan inherited much of that influence, but he also was burdened with the Nation's thuggish reputation. He sided with Elijah Muhammad in his public disagreement with Malcolm X, and Farrakhan was tainted by his presumed connection to Malcolm X's 1965 assassination. He has worked assiduously with the black nationalist community to minimize that long-standing animus. In April 1995 he met with Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow (who later died in a house fire), in a public reconciliation at New York's Apollo Theater. And yet, just as Farrakhan has gained the confidence of the disparate nationalist community, he is moving away from nationalism.

"I could never abandon the struggle of our people for justice and freedom," says Farrakhan when asked if he is abandoning nationalism. But he adds: "I have to recognize the universality of the religion of Islam, and I have to recognize the need for a better life, not only for us black people."

Farrakhan says the racial emphasis of the early Nation of Islam was a reaction to the white supremacy that permeated the culture at the time. He notes that many black people joined the Nation for racial rather than religious reasons. "Most of us were nationalist, but we accepted Islam," he explains. "We accepted a nationalist version of Islam, which was proper and right and fitting in the condition that we were in. Even Jesus started very narrowly."

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But there are many in the black community who feel that African-Americans are still vulnerable to white supremacy and need the countervailing influences of black nationalism. "I hear a lot of people who are very nervous about what Minister Farrakhan is doing," says Cliff Kelly, host of a popular talk show on WVON, a black-owned Chicago radio station. "My listeners aren't sure that we've got ourselves together enough yet to begin reaching out to others."

Kelly, who says he was a wholehearted supporter of the Million Man March, was considerably less enthusiastic about the Million Family March. "Had it been the 'black family march' I might have been more supportive. But I'm not ready to join with others just to say I joined with others. It seems to me that we will continue to lose in any coalition where we have nothing to bring to the table."

Many in the black community who feel unsettled by Farrakhan's new ecumenicalism echo Kelly's sentiments. Some of these anti-Farrakhan feelings are tinged with hypocrisy: Many who now condemn Farrakhan's de-emphasis of nationalism once were critics of that very same nationalism. Still, if such sentiments are common within the larger community, it's reasonable to assume that they are magnified among the legion of Farrakhan admirers who were attracted to him precisely because of his audacious black nationalism.

"I used to say that I would be down with Farrakhan, no matter what," explains Karimah Cannady, a former Nation of Islam member from New Jersey who has remained an admirer of Farrakhan. "But when I see his alliance with the Moonies [the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church] and his flirtation with Lyndon Larouche and folks like that, I begin to question his judgment."

Farrakhan insists that the Nation never has formed an alliance with Larouche, the anti-Semitic conspiracy theorist, though members occasionally have attended conferences organized by his followers. "We go, we participate and we listen to learn," Farrakhan says.

However, Farrakhan is much closer with Moon. Financial incentives may help smooth their relationship; the Unification Church reportedly footed a significant part of the bill for the Million Family March. "We have not formed an alliance as such, but there's mutual respect," Farrakhan told *In These Times*. "I respect the work Rev. Moon has done. The man's work and his influence are tremendous. All the things the Honorable Elijah Muhammad taught that he wanted us to do, the Rev. Moon and his followers are doing."

The 67-year-old Farrakhan's incongruous attraction to black youth also seems endangered by his new moderation. The very qualities of audacity that set him apart from the conciliatory (read: "sellout") leadership that black youth decry are being downplayed in his new image. It's unlikely that rap artists will find much of value to sample in his new sermons on religious and racial unity.

Other black groups so far are reluctant to comment on the importance of Farrakhan's changing emphasis until they see how it plays out within the Nation of Islam itself. "I'm not really sure what kind of effect Farrakhan's new direction will have on the black community," says Robert Starks, a professor of political science at Northeastern Illinois University's Center for Inner City Studies in Chicago and chairman of the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment. "I think his moves will have more of an internal effect on the Nation, than in the black community at large. As far as I know, he won't be changing any of his current emphasis on economic independence and community empowerment."

But the Nation has influence far beyond its membership, and the group's internal divisions often play out in the larger society—too often in destructive ways. The conflict between Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad is just one example of how an internal dispute provoked divisions among black activists that lasted more than 30 years.

While Farrakhan seems headed toward orthodox Islam, he also is becoming more explicitly political. His public appeals for attention from the two major parties, and his overtures to vice presidential candidate Joe Lieberman, reveal his intentions to assert a new political influence. And if he can maintain his wide range of influence while altering his rogue image, Farrakhan could become an important power broker. However, some black analysts note the Nation of Islam has more in common with the religious right than with the liberal left that traditionally has allied with African-Americans.

"Although I applaud his move away from narrow nationalism, I'm still skeptical of his politics," says Barbara Ransby of the University of Illinois in Chicago, who is one of the founders of the Black Radical Congress and consistently has provided a radical critique of Farrakhan's militant conservatism. "He seems firmly wedded to a conservative and patriarchal view of the family and I would prefer that message to have a smaller rather than broader audience."

Farrakhan may well confound his critics by adopting a model of progressive politics that is characteristic of left-leaning religious groups. In fact, the "National Agenda" that accompanied his Million Family March is a rather curious mixture of progressive and conservative policy prescriptions. Consider the agenda's "Declaration of Family Bill of Rights and Responsibility," which includes the following: "All families have a right to a livable income to attain and maintain decent shelter, food, clothes, exposure to the arts and cultural integrity but also the responsibility to seek self-help, self-determination and shared responsibility for eliminating poverty and economic inequities."

"All of the things the Honorable Elijah Muhammad taught that he wanted us to do, the Rev. Moon and his followers are doing."

Or this: "All families have a right to be free from inequities and discrimination based on immigration status, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and religion but also the responsibility to internally and externally resist prejudice and bigotry."

If nothing else, we are witnessing the evolution of one of the African-American community's most durable groups. It remains the most disciplined black group in the country. Whatever happens to the Nation of Islam, there is no doubt the rest of us eventually will feel the impact. Whether that impact will be positive or negative depends almost solely on the skills of Farrakhan. ■

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THE NEW NEW IMPERIALISM

A year after the "Battle in Seattle," the rich are embracing their critics. Watch out.

By G. Pascal Zachary

ACCRA, GHANA

The cedis, the local currency, has lost half its value since January. The most common note is worth less than 30 cents. When dispensing cash, banks no longer count their bills. They weigh them. A good month's wage is the size of a brick and not much lighter. People carry their money in plastic bags because pockets (no less wallets) aren't big enough to fit their fat wads.

This West African country of 19 million imports its oil, whose prices have surged this year; yet the value of its own commodities, notably cocoa and gold, have stagnated. This hurts the quality of life in Ghana. Prices are rising faster than wages. Three-quarters of Ghanaians die from preventable diseases. Foreign investment is nonexistent.

"Growth is occurring, but it is unequal growth," says Yao Graham, chief of Third World Network's Africa branch and editor of *Public Agenda*, a muckraking weekly newspaper here. "Many ordinary people are worse off and, like elsewhere, the gap between rich and poor is widening." Graham cites the plight of a cleaner in his office, who earns $20 a month, being asked to pay four years' rent up front because his landlord wants protection against inflation. Such demands are typical.

And this is in Ghana, a country celebrated by development experts as an island of tranquillity, a haven from the civil war and rampant crime that has engulfed much of sub-Saharan Africa. In the '90s, when much of Africa fell into disorder, Ghana moved toward democracy, scaled back its military, opened up its press, encouraged the spread of civic organizations and got its public finances into better order, following the stern advice of the International Monetary Fund. Even Jerry Rawlings, Ghana's president, who originally came to power in a coup, has agreed to peacefully give up office next month following national elections. Compared to its neighbors—Sierra Leone (brutal civil war), Liberia (criminal dictator and haven for diamond smugglers), Nigeria (ethnic violence and squandered oil bounty) and Ivory Coast (a recent failed military coup)—Ghana is a dream nation.

What's Ghana's reward for its good behavior? Economic setbacks that make it another face of world capitalism in crisis. Globally, this crisis has spread far and wide since the East Asian currency shocks of 1997. The following year the Russian ruble collapsed, smashing the enchanting illusion that the former Soviet bloc could swiftly take advantage of freer markets, private capital and lax government regulation.



TERRY LABAN

Since then, the liberal ideal of private initiative and widening international trade has lost its magical allure.

Even among ardent believers in the benefits of freer markets, there is a new acceptance that capitalism bestows unequal benefits. The conventional wisdom on Wall Street now reads like a populist primer: Winners are generally those countries who had a head start in terms of education and wealth, while losers often had weak economies, more poverty and poorer educational systems in the first place.

Politically, the change is dramatic. The protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle a year ago formally marked the end of the decade-long advance of neoliberal economic ideas around the globe. This fall's annual meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in Prague turned into a contest over which fat cat could show the most contrition for capitalism's shortcomings and evince the greatest sympathy for the poor.

Hand-wringing by the rich shows no signs of abating. Even Bill Gates sided with the global poor recently, chiding a group of high-tech executives for insisting that innovation would somehow help the great unwashed and then asking, existentially: "I mean, do people have a clear view of what it means to live on $1 a day?"

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But critics of capitalism should think again before patting themselves on the back. The establishment's race to embrace critics of globalization makes a mockery of the painful re-evaluation of neoliberalism that remains to be done. Poverty pimping, on a global scale, is a beguiling sideshow. Calls for a new consensus around an "enlightened capitalism"—made by tycoon George Soros and *Business Week*—run smack into the reality that remedies for the market's extremes are difficult and often unpopular with capitalists themselves.

Critics of capitalism rarely offer alternatives for managing the social, economic and cultural processes that fall under the rubric of "globalization." And there is a growing awareness that positive alternatives to neoliberalism are more important than the further trashing of the great beast. "We need a vision," said Andrea Durbin, a strategist at Friends of the Earth, on the eve of the Prague protests. "What do we propose instead?"

Hand-wringing by the rich shows no signs of abating. Even Bill Gates asks: "Do people have a clear view of what it means to live on $1 a day?"

The answer remains elusive. Critics are working on various responses to market failures around the world, but none are comprehensive. For instance, Durbin is helping to push a campaign to extend corporate accountability laws, prevalent in the United States, to the far-flung operations of multinationals. Others, of course, back trading rules linked to labor and environmental standards. These are worthwhile efforts, especially if they lead to heightened responsibility by multinationals for their actions in developing countries. But piecemeal reforms, as always, have limits.

These limits can be grouped into two broad classes. First, those who seek to make global institutions more progressive (or "poor friendly") collide with the currents of history. These shadowy institutions, from the World Bank to the World Trade Organization, seem increasingly *less* influential even as protesters endow them with more power than they've had in decades. The World Bank, for all its bluster about making "poverty reduction" its top priority, has little leverage in the market. Private capital flows now dwarf public ones, so that World Bank policies count for less and less. The WTO, meanwhile, can't muster support for further trade liberalization; it can't find a way to push through the admission of China; it can't even prevent the United States and Europe from moving to the brink of a trade war.

If reform of existing institutions offers limited potential, what about trying a new script? One neoliberal shibboleth is that private actors outperform public ones. But there are aspects of life, such as health care, transportation and housing, where market failures impose great social costs. The critics of capitalism need to be more radical. Maybe state ownership of production and distribution—a cornerstone of the early Cold War economic consensus—has to be resuscitated on a new basis. State-ownership fell into disrepute in the '80s in the West, with many countries dismantling, or at least sharply cutting back, direct public influence on the economy with successive waves of privatization. The questionable wisdom of this course remains unchallenged.

The second type of limitation on reform stems from the nature of capitalism itself: the system is dynamic, not static. The problems of today may be overshadowed by new ones tomorrow. Indeed, the very instability of capitalism (which so animated Marx's thinking 150 years ago) is growing. No less a mainstream economic authority than Paul Krugman presented a closely reasoned paper at an elite gathering of central bankers held in August by the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank. Krugman concluded that greater economic integration was leading to more frequent crises for the system. In declaring that "persistent if low-grade anxiety" was a feature of globalized capitalism, he implied that a new crisis is incubating in the system.

Everyone has their own candidate for where this crisis will erupt, though the safest bets may be somewhere in the rich world. Western Europe, with its free-falling currency and dependence on imported oil, faces fresh challenges to its competitive position and no political consensus on how to respond to threats to growth. It is one thing to bail out Mexico or Russia, but who bails out the European Union if the euro collapses?

The United States, meanwhile, carries the seeds of its own undoing. Two American economists, Maurice Obstfeld and Kenneth Rogoff, noted at the same Fed conference that the U.S. current account deficit (the shortfall between flow of money in and out of the United States) this year reached nearly 4 percent of gross domestic product—more than double the average from 1992 to 1998. This sets the stage for a painful reversal: a drastic loss of value in the dollar, a flight of capital and an erosion of the U.S. competitive position.

But before cheering this result as a matter of the United States and Western Europe getting their just rewards for so much success, even if the next crisis does hit there, it will not change the stubborn reality that the triumph of capitalism in the '90s was another of triumph for the North. On a global basis, the haves in the North (whether natives or newcomers) raced even further ahead of the have-nots of the South. And there's no sign that the gap is narrowing.

Hence there is an emerging debate about what the British development specialist Robert Biel calls in his new (and unfortunately esoteric) book, *The New Imperialism*. The "old" imperialism, which led to the 19th-century scramble for African and Asian possessions, inspired Lenin to theorize that the West would destroy itself in a battle for colonial supremacy. He was almost right. But the rich nations learned their lessons. Whatever the "new imperialism" might be, it is not a battle for geographic position. Linked to cyberspace and knowledge industries—and leveraging unprecedented mobility of ordinary people—the new Northern imperialism sucks out what's best from the South and grafts these assets onto their winning societies, leaving the carcass of underdevelopment behind.

It is this carcass that the consciences of the rich suddenly claim to care so much about. But for how long? ■

G. Pascal Zachary *is the author of* The Global Me: New Cosmopolitans and the Competitive Edge *(Public Affairs)*.

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THE NEXT SEATTLE

Naomi Klein looks into the future of the movement

By Jane Slaughter

It has been nearly a year since the "Battle in Seattle" gave the globalizers a wake-up call. Many on the left were equally jolted by the commitment and radicalism of the young protesters, who seemed to arrive out of nowhere. But the events of Seattle were foretold by 30-year-old Canadian Naomi Klein. In her 1999 book, *No Logo*, Klein explained how corporations' twin profit strategies—their hyper-marketing and their outsourcing of labor—had created a generation of activists who feel no stake in the system.

The daughter of American parents who fled to Canada during the Vietnam War, Klein edited *This Magazine*, based in Toronto, and wrote a weekly column on marketing and advertising for the *Toronto Star*. She now writes a column for the *Toronto Globe and Mail* and has just completed a documentary version of *No Logo* for Britain's Channel Four. Far from just a commentator on the movement, though, Klein is a self-described "anti-corporate deadhead": Yes, she was in Washington, Windsor, Los Angeles and Prague.

Klein spoke with *In These Times* from Seattle.

No Logo *came out before Seattle and yet ended with a very Seattle-type moment. Now you're credited with "predicting Seattle."*

It was easy to predict if you weren't just looking at the United States. Seattle didn't begin it all. The United States is playing catch-up. There had been protests of that size, of that level of militancy, even with that level of diversity, in other cities around the world. Seattle was really about Americans joining an international movement in mid-stream.

The strength of Seattle was the coalition of young protesters and labor. It was Teamsters and turtles; that was what made it extraordinary. But Seattle was also about Jose Bove [the French sheep farmer who led an attack on a McDonald's outlet] coming from France and meeting the leader of the Philippines peasant movement, who then came and testified at Bove's trial in France; and maquiladora workers marching with Steelworkers; and Indian farmers, who had been campaigning against genetic modification of foods, meeting British and American campaigners. That was the strength of Seattle—it was all those coalitions, many of them cross-border.

But for a lot of people it was such a surprise that Seattle even happened that they felt, "Whatever strange alchemy led us to this moment, we can't let it go." And the way in which it seemed most obvious to hold onto it was to try to replicate it in other "next Seattles," whether it was Washington or Los Angeles or Philadelphia [at the party conventions].

When people talk about replicating Seattle, it seems to be just about shutting down a city while there's a meeting going on. The thing about Seattle was that it was radical tactics meeting a radical target and producing a radical political victory. It had the concrete goal of stopping the Millennium Round. In Washington [at the World Bank and IMF meetings

THE VIEW FROM CAMPUS

By Bhumika Muchhala

During the year since the "Battle in Seattle," major concerns have been raised about the movement around globalization: its lack of a unified vision, the absence of people of color, and the barriers to expanding the movement's reach. The Institute for Policy Studies interviewed dozens of student activists from across the country to document their experiences, opinions and thoughts of the movement they helped create. What emerges is significant insight into the opinions and ideas of students in the movement. A sampling:

"At the A16 protests [in Washington against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund] I was talking to two black deputy officers who said that if we had been marching in the streets against urban poverty, they would be happy to march with us. They didn't understand why we were marching for people in poor countries, but not against urban poverty in America. People of color want to see how the A16 discourse affects them on a daily basis. If the movement is to be inclusive, organizing on the community level needs to be done by the same people who show up at the protests."

Jesse Dickerman
Rice Students for Global Justice
Rice University

"I think it is necessary to have a unifying vision, but I don't think the student movement is there yet. If there was a unified vision, you would see a much more organized left, like Students for a Democratic Society in the '60s, which had national networks and a membership upwards of tens of thousands of people. We don't look anything like that because there are too many different groups. What was unique about the '60s is that the Vietnam War polarized everything and brought people together."

Snehal Shingavi
United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)
University of California, Berkeley

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in April] they were trying to stop the World Bank in general. Which is really different, because you don't have the potential for leaving with that sense of concrete victory.

And now a lot of the people who were involved in that process of "replicating Seattle"—and I include myself in that, if more peripherally—are questioning these strategies. You have somebody like John Sellers of the Ruckus Society, who has been so instrumental in training people in these radical shutdown tactics, saying, "We're leading with our tactics, not our message." I think we're seeing kind of a mass realization.



Naomi Klein

After Seattle everyone talked about the "coalition in the streets" between labor and the direct action folks, but then the AFL-CIO seemed to quickly lose interest. In Washington, the AFL-CIO's priority was arguing against China being in the WTO, and they put all their effort into their own separate rally. Are there any prospects for the Seattle "coalition" being rebuilt?

The AFL-CIO absolutely dropped the ball. They got a taste of being a part of a genuine social movement, and the power that would be implicit in that, and ever since then they've sabotaged it at every step. They haven't just damaged the coalition with the students, though. They've damaged the coalition with the [global] South by joining with the American right and being associated with this borderline racist, protectionist rhetoric against China. We're talking shortsighted goals, immediate political expediency. And the point of Seattle, to me, was that here was this taste of a whole level of politics that was not about expediency.

The Canadian labor movement is not that shortsighted. Since Seattle, there has been really great work between the labor movement and the student movement and the anarchists. We saw it in Windsor when the meeting of the Organization of American States was held in June. This is a union town, and on these issues the Canadian Auto Workers is a truly visionary union. They understand themselves to be part of a social movement, and that means giving money to and working with very radical anti-poverty groups that are organizing the unemployed and are occupying buildings. They understand there has to be a diversity of tactics depending on the level of enfranchisement, and that they happen to represent people who are very middle-class at this point. They understand that that doesn't mean that everybody is middle-class.

Historically it has been true that the top leaders of the labor movement have been leery of being part of coalitions they don't control.

There is already quite a lot of distrust, and there's such a vast gulf in organizing styles. So many of the key organizers believe passionately in decentralized, non-hierarchical organizing—the cornerstone of the way these protests have been organized, through affinity groups and convergence centers, really radically decentralized democracy. In that context a lot of unions look incredibly hierarchical and seem to replicate traditional power structures. The only way to get through some of this is to work together, and if you don't, then a lot of bad blood gets created.

Part of it has to do with the fact that a lot of the young people are coming from an environmental background, not a

"It's hard to communicate your ideals to really close-minded people such as we have here in Louisiana. I challenge this barrier by talking to people one-on-one without being exceedingly preachy or looking down on them for their conservatism. I think that when people are approached with an idea that is presented rationally, calmly and with sufficient evidence, their old ideas can be chipped away at slowly, even if their minds aren't changed in one epiphanous bang."

William Winters
Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC)
Louisiana State University

"What I think we are aiming toward in a vision is democratic and local control, where individuals worldwide have a say in their own lives. Eventually, I think a broad vision will come together through constant dialogue. However, I don't see a lot of people working on a broad agenda, rather, I see a lot of work being done on local agendas."

Sabrina Gorbett
Student Alliance to Reform Corporations (STARC)
Butler University

"We live in a country where the overwhelming majority of students are white and where it's very hard for people of color to obtain higher education, let alone be in activist groups. At the USAS conference in Eugene, Oregon this summer, 15 of the 100 people who were there were people of color. Fifteen percent is not ideal, but it is a step in the right direction. To me, what's important is that the 15 percent feels involved and not alienated."

Peter Romer-Friedman
Students Organizing for Labor and Economic Equality (SOLE)
University of Michigan

For a full copy of the report, Student Activism: Voices from the Inside, see www.ips-dc.org or call 202-234-9382.

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labor background. A lot of young people see unions as a job-protection racket. They also see unions as representing polluting industries and not being terribly concerned with the issues that move them. So there needs to be serious work done that's more than marching together for an afternoon. And I don't see much evidence from the AFL-CIO leadership that they are interested in doing that serious work.

It's really too bad, because labor has much to contribute to this movement, particularly in terms of educating some of the younger activists on what it means to take power seriously. To not just protest, but actually sit down at the table and negotiate it and go to the next step. It's not just getting labor's bodies, it's getting labor's skills and expertise.

For everyone who's involved in this movement, the task intellectually now is to identify the common threads of this web.

Most of the young people I worked with in Detroit for an anti-WTO day, who then went on to organize the anti-OAS protest, didn't seem to be interested in attracting people who weren't just like themselves.

There is a much broader issue: the very basic concept of convincing people who disagree with you, reaching out to people who don't understand what you're talking about if they haven't been to all the meetings; the idea of basic respectful communication, assuming that you need to convince people instead of just acting out. That's something we all have to think about and is the real key to building a broad-based movement.

I've made this criticism in activist gatherings, and people are just like, "Well, come and help us, because we are totally burned out and we're giving this everything we have, and you're right, we don't have time to decode all this language and come up with incredibly accessible agitprop as well." A lot of what's coming off as "fuck you, we don't care" is really about resources.

So that's where the issue of serial protesting comes back. Because it's a bit of a vicious cycle. Organizing these protests takes every bit of energy that the movement has, everything, all of its resources, all of its money to bail everybody out of jail. So much more energy is going into jail solidarity training than into how to talk to the media.

I don't think the issue is that we need a manifesto or a 10-point plan. For everyone who's involved in this movement, the task intellectually now is to identify the common threads of this web. One of the threads is privatization, another is militarization. That's where the treatment of protesters by the cops ties in with the explosion of the prison system and ties in with the drug war and ties in with U.S. military spending. It's there, but it's not enough to just say, "We live in a police state. Fuck the cops." That's not going to get us anywhere.

As far as I know, there isn't a big mass protest planned for the United States in the near future. If there is a down period, then there should be time to develop the threads internationally and think about how you translate these issues into messages that are going to resonate with people who don't agree with you. How do you talk to people? It's a skill just like nonviolence training and jail solidarity, and it should be taken as seriously.

I think it's very good that there isn't a "next Seattle" next week. ■

THE WATCHERS

By Bill Berkowitz

In response to the anti-globalization movement's numbers and vigilance, multinational companies and right-wing think tanks are beginning to take aim at the protesters.

According to a document obtained by the newsletter *Inside EPA*, the Sony Corporation has been preparing an "action plan for counteracting the efforts of several domestic and international environmental groups—including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition" that are involved in a campaign to hold electronics manufacturers responsible for their toxic waste.

Last summer in Brussels, Belgium, Sony representatives presented a paper called "NGO Strategy" to the European Information and Communications Technology Industry Association's conference on environmental policy. Sony's strategic suggestions included "pre-funding intervention" to reduce the financial support that liberal foundations give to environmental organizations; a recommendation that companies ratchet up their capability to quickly respond to environmental critics and pre-empt future legislation; and the development of a "detailed monitoring and contact network" to keep tabs on these organizations.

Inside EPA suggests that that this monitoring might be carried out by "one of the dozens of new Internet 'intelligence' agencies—such as the London-based Infonics PLC—that monitor chat rooms, e-mail lists, electronic bulletin boards, online news services, newsgroups and other sources of public information for specific data requested by a company or industry group."

Sony executives have acknowledged that the company is monitoring environmental groups. "We are obviously concerned about our image," Mark Small, Sony's vice president of environmental and health and safety issues, told the InterPress news service. "If Greenpeace is pushing something, we want to be on top if it."

Sony's interest in "pre-funding intervention" dovetails with the publication of "Who Props Up the Protesters," an extensive report from Truth About Trade, a new organization that purports to "tell the truth" about the organizations active in the Seattle demonstrations and the foundations that fund them.

Truth About Trade is a Des Moines, Iowa-based agriculture industry group headed by Dean Kleckner, former president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, a leading agribusi-

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ness lobby. Kleckner says that Truth About Trade's mission is "to stand up for farm exports and advancements in biotechnology based on sound science," and to prevent environmental extremists and radical protesters from limiting America's economic and technological potential.

Truth About Trade's report (www.truthabouttrade.com) provides "an outline of the history, goals, financial strength and level of activism for ... organizations involved in the anti-trade protests in Seattle." "Who Props Up the Protesters" contains profiles of more than 50 "environmental groups actively opposing trade," including the Ruckus Society, Direct Action Network, Earth Island Institute, Friends of the Earth, Global Exchange and the National Wildlife Federation, and details how these groups participated in the Seattle protests.

For just one example, in its profile of the Berkeley, California-based Ruckus Society, Truth About Trade asserts that Ruckus uses its training on nonviolent civil disobedience as a cover for its real agenda: "violent lawbreaking" by "leaders [who] are no stranger to violence themselves, [and who] might actually have expected the vandalism by the anarchist members of their protest."

One of Truth about Trade's most significant contributions to intelligence gathering is documentation that the fair-trade network is bankrolled by "grantmakers [who] are funneling large sums of money to environmental groups." Among the major foundations highlighted are the Bullitt Foundation, HKH Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Pew Charitable Trust, Rockefeller Foundation, Turner Foundation, W. Alton Jones Foundation and C.S. Mott Foundation.

There are several other conservative institutions focusing on the foundations who are providing the financial lifeblood for the environmental movement. The Washington-based Capital Research Center is one of the rising stars in the crowded universe of right-wing think tanks (www.capitalresearch.org). Established in 1984, the Capital Research Center analyzes how "those organizations with tax-exempt, tax-deductible—and sometimes tax dollars—mix advocacy and 'direct action' to promote their own vision of the public interest." It also looks at how closely individuals in the corporate and foundation sectors are sticking to the "donor intent" of the founders of these corporations and foundations.

Conservatives become apoplectic when they discover that a significant amount of money earmarked for environmental groups comes from foundations established by free-market entrepreneurs who accumulated enormous wealth based on decidedly anti-environmental activities. "The source of wealth for the Pew Trusts comes from energy exploration and development," the Capital Research Center's President Robert Huberty told the House Resource Committee at a May hearing.

Complaining about Pew support for a forest protection campaign, he said that the original intent of the founders of the foundation was to "acquaint the American people [with] the evils of bureaucracy, the values of a free market and the paralyzing effects of government controls on the lives and activities of people."

Frustrated, Huberty asked, "How do the Pew Trusts honor the intentions of their donor by supporting a campaign to permanently end logging in a large portion of the national forests?"

Anti-globalization activities clearly are becoming a direct threat to global corporate power. Surveillance, propaganda and counter-intelligence efforts mounted by the rich and powerful are just beginning to reveal themselves, but they surely are a harbinger of things to come.

Bill Berkowitz *is a freelance writer covering the religious right and related conservative movements. Contact him by e-mail at wkbbronx@aol.com.*



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Bob Burnett

Bob Burnett, publisher

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Open Season

By **Bill Boisvert**

The problem with globalization is that it isn't global enough. Why stop with global markets? Why not global trade unions and global environmental laws? Why not turn the world into one big school district and let Nike workers in Vietnam vote for property tax millages on Phil Knight's mansion in Oregon? That would be indisputably global, yet ideas like that never make it onto the agenda of globalization's advocates.

A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Hidden Promise of Globalization
By John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge
Times Business
368 pages, $27.50

The word "globalization," properly speaking, ought to apply to any institution or mechanism that lets people in different countries coordinate their efforts, to whatever end. But in practice it applies only to markets, while other transnational legal and governmental arrangements that might help people to bargain collectively or regulate pollution or redistribute wealth are attacked as outright impediments to globalization. Which means that globalization is really a code word for laissez-faire capitalism.

Such, unfortunately, is the case with John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge's *A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Hidden Promise of Globalization*. The authors, staffers at *The Economist*, seem to promise a more expansive view, one that will "confront the harsh questions concerning those people who lose on account of globalization, not just economically but socially and culturally." The book never lives up to this claim, which is not surprising, since they also mean it as a "call to arms" for all of globalism's "faint-hearted" defenders. By sticking with the usual narrow, ideologically loaded conception of globalization, they've produced a self-contradictory mess that does little to bolster confidence in free trade, even as it demonstrates why business elites have adopted it as their rallying cry. Micklethwait and Wooldridge want to make an "intellectual case for globalization," so it's worthwhile to ask how strong this really is.

The case for free trade rests on the doctrine of comparative advantage, which holds that nations should specialize in what they do best and trade for other necessities. Thus Cuba should trade its cigars for French wine, instead of each country trying to grow both tobacco and grapes.

The theory of comparative advantage was developed 200 years ago, when farming was the mainstay of every economy, and in that context it's an appealing argument. It's clearly absurd for, say, Finland to grow oranges in subsidized greenhouses. But things are trickier when one looks beyond resource industries like agriculture and mining, where comparative advantage is fixed by climate and geology. In a modern economy, comparative advantage is fluid. A country's proficiency in manufacturing, technology and services can change radically over time, and is strongly influenced by investment patterns and government policy.



To say that a country should specialize in what it does best is a little tautological, since, to an important extent, a country does best at what it chooses to specialize in. And nations have a definite idea that it's better to be best at certain things rather than others. That's why developing economies use trade barriers and subsidies to shelter their industries. The Asian Tigers did, as they traded in their advantage in rice paddies for an advantage in semi-conductors. So did the United States as it moved away from its original comparative advantage in exporting beaver pelts.

There are other advantages to globalization, the argument goes, besides a more rational division of labor between countries. When it comes to markets, size matters. Bigger markets generate economies of scale, and more firms mean more competition and innovation. But as with everything else, there are diminishing returns to size. Expanding a market from one carmaker to three is crucial, and from three to 30 probably helpful, but 300 carmakers is overkill, perhaps even a hindrance, since each little company may lack the resources to invest in innovative technology.

And where does innovation come from, anyway? It comes from big, state-funded university laboratories, and from big corporate R&D departments, in which rich countries abound. It tends not to come from poor countries. Free trade is therefore not just a simple exercise in logic, but Micklethwait and Wooldridge never come to grips with its complexities.

And M&W never really succeed in explaining why vast, sophisticated economies like the United States and Europe need trade. What exactly do they get from other countries? M&W don't have a convincing answer. At one point they offer this incoherent rationale: "If everybody can make the same product

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everywhere," then "Californianness" or "Germanness" might "become a firm's distinguishing mark." That makes comparative advantage sound completely meaningless, nothing more than a labeling strategy. And if everything can be made everywhere, why not make everything at home?

At other times they stand on principle, writing that "liberty itself" demands "the freedom for Americans to drive German cars or ... Germans to use American software." But that's not an important freedom, because Americans build good cars and Germans write good software. M&W do note, cogently, that consumers pay more when tariffs raise the price of imports. Thus trade barriers protect some workers from foreign competition only by imposing a diffuse, invisible tax on society as a whole. But so what? Fire departments protect the few people whose houses catch fire at the cost of taxing the rest of society. That's what governments do: They share the load.

That cheap goods often entail high social costs is the crux of the debate. Unfortunately, M&W's grasp of social issues is weaker than their economic theory. They tend to caricature opponents as reactionary hate-mongers who remind them of Pat Buchanan and Hitler, and they are remarkably dismissive of serious critics. They cite at some length the anti-globalist misgivings of the British conservative John Gray, but then write: "Now is not the place [*sic*] to go into why Gray is wrong." In 368 pages, now is never the place. They also quote the AFL-CIO's Thea Lee, who wonders why multinationals insist on the Third World adopting Western trademark law, so that they can't make cheap knock-offs of *Lion King* videos or AIDS drugs, but don't insist on their adopting Western environmental or labor laws. The authors call that a "fair question," but they never answer it.

Sometimes their arguments just seem obtuse, as in their chapter on global culture. They regard complaints about "Americanization" as basically a conspiracy on the part of French movie directors. What the mandarins in Paris don't see, they explain, is that the forms of American mass culture are being taken over by local content, so that Brazilian telenovelas and Czech sitcoms and Cantonese rock bands are displacing their American counterparts. Even management theory, that most American of all cultural artifacts, has been co-opted by Asian gurus. But M&W miss the point that multicultural consumerism is not the same as multiculturalism. When Brazil makes sudsier soap operas, and Hong Kong more explosive action thrillers, and the local McDonald's sells tandoori chicken, and *Krishna* CEO displaces *Jesus* CEO in bookstores, and all customs and all values everywhere get assimilated into management theory—well, that's what the French would call Americanization.

M&W spend a great deal of effort trying to debunk some of the alleged scare stories about globalization, but they often end up amplifying them. They scoff at fears that globalization will set off a "beggar-thy-labor" vicious circle in which countries slash wages and social benefits to attract business. But then they note that "wage inflation remains low partly because so many Americans are terrified of losing their jobs," and applaud the boost in productivity when "workers [are] reminded that factories could be relocated to cheaper countries." After ridiculing the "absurdly cozy perks" enjoyed by UAW members, they liken one Flint autoworker to a "deer" who will receive "an arrow through the neck" as he is "culled" by globalization. And they wonder why people are panicking!

One Flint autoworker is likened to a "deer" who will receive "an arrow through the neck" as he is "culled" by globalization.

Blue collar workers aren't the only ones who will get it in the neck—so will the elderly. M&W claim that in 30 years the upkeep of retired Baby Boomers will soak up "an extra 9 to 16 percent of GDP" and require tax increases that will "unleash a generational war as the young refuse to impoverish themselves in order to indulge the aging children of Woodstock." Greedy pensioners will "undermin[e] competitiveness" unless we "enlist the help of the private sector."

It's a senseless argument: The economy will likely grow by far more than 16 percent over the next 30 years—and if the number of oldsters is growing, why shouldn't they claim a bigger share of GDP? Nonetheless, it's typical of the way vague claims about global competitiveness drive a wholly unsupported agenda of privatization and government retrenchment as part of a larger disparagement of the welfare state. Governments should focus on "doing a few things well," M&W say, and shift the burden of "personal security" onto "prudent individuals and global markets."

It's an argument that's implicit in the very imagery of globalization. Like other globalist literature, *A Future Perfect* abounds in human-interest profiles of downtrodden Third Worlders who pass instantly from underdevelopment to overdevelopment thanks to the market. M&W write of Bangladeshi peasants who use their cell phones to check commodity prices on the world market, and a tiny perfume shop in Tangiers that sells its wares over the Web. Like those ubiquitous telecom commercials in which a plodding shepherd leads the world into the digital future, these vignettes suggest an easy-going compatibility between premodern agrarian localism and post-modern high-tech capitalism. (Inevitably, M&W showcase a real shepherd, who lives in the Orkney Islands and tends his flock of 700 sheep every morning before telecommuting to his other job as a software developer.)

What's obsolete is modernity itself—industrial, bureaucratic society, organized around large corporations and an activist state—along with political parties, labor unions, the welfare state and all the other institutions that used to mediate development. Development has become the task of wireless technology, which seamlessly integrates individuals into the universal citizenship of the marketplace. The message is clear: Not only has the Third World, last repository of the left's revolutionary ambitions, gone over to capitalism, but the left's great achievement—social democracy—is itself a roadblock to development.

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But what should be done about the losers in this scheme? M&W have little in the way of concrete proposals. To their credit, they urge the developed world to spend more on foreign aid and debt relief, but they offer no advice to poor countries if the aid should not be forthcoming. "Ethical capitalism makes sense," they write, but if multinationals won't listen to reason, then nothing should be done about it, since "the most cruel use of 'fair trade' comes when it is tied to ... labor issues and environmental standards."

Yes, we will be ruled over by an international cadre of corporate managers whose only home is Business Class, but at least losers might benefit from their charitable largesse as they "bring their methods as well as their money to philanthropy"—especially Bill Gates, whose "relentlessly curious and competitive brain is plainly beginning to whir" with charity projects. And M&W allow that education ("investing in human capital") is one of the few things government should bother its head about—apparently Western teenagers should not be encouraged to pursue their comparative advantage in fast food jobs. But is that a panacea for the predicament of labor? What happens if global educational investments produce a global glut of education? When Indian and Filipino programmers start competing with Americans on a wider scale, high-tech may no longer be a labor aristocracy.

Trade is good, especially for the developing world. There should be more trade. But we should not follow the authors of *A Future Perfect* in assuming that the only alternative to the pitiless uniformity of free trade is no trade at all.

Consider the European Union. M&W regard Europe as something of a house of horrors because of its trade barriers and "inflexible" labor markets. But the EU is surely the most successful model for globalization. Trade within the EU has boomed. Formerly backward economies like Spain and Ireland have closed the gap with the richer countries. The region is an economic powerhouse that, unlike the United States, runs a big trade surplus with the rest of the world. It is ruled by liberal democracies. Workers are fat and happy, not lean and mean. The EU achieved all this with determined efforts to redistribute wealth, with a region-wide consensus on lavish welfare benefits to shield workers from economic dislocation, and with lots of senseless trade rules that mollified this or that group of losers. This is surely the best way to bring together the world's economies.

In fact, it is the only way. Because there's a difference between people and deer—deer don't shoot back. ■

God Rest Ye Merry Merchants

By Chris Rasmussen

In his mawkish 1942 hit "White Christmas," Bing Crosby yearned for a holiday "just like the one I used to know." The extraordinary popularity of Crosby's nostalgic longing (the all-time top-selling single until it was eclipsed by "Candle in the Wind," Elton John's mawkish tribute to Princess Diana) suggests the holiday's tremendous power to revive memories—perhaps only imaginary, idealized memories—of childhood and Christmases past. According to Karal Ann Marling, "Christmas is the universal memory" for contemporary Americans (whether they're Christian or not), an event in which "virtually everybody has played a part." By telling the story of Americans' celebration of Christmas, she promises to uncover a surprisingly neglected piece of not only our national past, but our collective wishes and psyche.

Merry Christmas! Celebrating America's Greatest Holiday
By Karal Ann Marling
Harvard University Press
464 pages, $27



Marling, a prolific and inventive cultural historian at the University of Minnesota who has written books on topics ranging from George Washington and Norman Rockwell to Disneyland and Graceland, now turns her attention to the history of America's most lavishly celebrated holiday. Marling has a keen eye for offbeat topics, arresting detail and original interpretations, and refuses "to plug the contents of the national Christmas stocking into the socket of orthodox historical discourse" (certainly that sounds unadvisable). She insists instead that her goal is to unwrap the hidden meaning of quotidian, but telling objects and practices to reveal the holiday's deeper significance.

Myriad "scraps of Christmas detritus"—and Christmas generates loads of detritus—supply Marling with ample material: Shortly after Halloween, America's shopping malls and stores are festooned with red and green and stocked from floor to ceiling with Christmas gifts. In the days after Christmas, discarded

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trees, still dangling tinsel, lie amid trash bags stuffed with discarded wrapping paper and packaging on curbs across the nation. Somewhere in between the shopping bags and the trash bags, millions of Americans attend their annual office party, endure children's pageants, spend billions of dollars buying presents, cook traditional feasts, and gather with family and friends to exchange gifts and celebrate the nation's most extravagant holiday. Wrapping paper, lights, ornaments, store window displays, trees, cards, Santas and cookies fill the thematic chapters of *Merry Christmas!* The history of Christmas, as Marling observes promisingly, is in the details.

Americans commonly assume that Christmas endured for centuries as a solemn religious holiday, before being corrupted by consumer capitalism. As early as the 1870s, critics of Christmas were engaging in "breast-beating over soulless American materialism." In 1949, opponents of the holiday's excess launched a crusade to "restore" its "original" character. Billboards, posters and bumper stickers urging Americans to "Put Christ Back into Christmas" were a common sight during the holiday season throughout the 1950s. Like many tales of decline, this Christmas story proves a fable. In colonial America, Christmas was either not celebrated at all (it was actually illegal to celebrate the holiday in many Puritan communities), or an occasion for boisterous, drunken revelry.

In fact nearly all of Americans' Christmas rituals and icons are 19th-century inventions, created to venerate home and family, not the birth of Jesus. Christmas trees, artfully bedecked with ornaments, became the focal point of Americans' Christmas celebrations in the 1850s. Santa Claus became an icon in the 1860s and 1870s, springing from the pen of cartoonist Thomas Nast. Gift-giving became commonplace in the 1870s and 1880s, as more Americans adopted the practice of purchasing inexpensive, factory-made trinkets—"gewgaws" and "gimcracks"—and wrapping the presents to produce surprise. By century's end, Christmas had become a legal holiday in every state, and the year's most eagerly anticipated holiday for millions. In the 1920s, advertisers transformed Santa into a jovial salesman, whose girth and cheerfulness embodied consumer abundance: According to Marling, St. Nick, not that gangly, gaunt Uncle Sam, best personifies America.

As Marling observes, Americans' celebration of Christmas grew along with material abundance and consumer culture, and the department store window, not the Nativity scene, has always furnished the holiday's central icon. "Christmas," she writes, "is all about stores and shopping." Conversely, stores and shopping rely heavily on Christmas. Last year, Americans spent a record $184 billion during the Christmas shopping season (officially, the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas), and many retailers depend on Christmas sales for one quarter of their annual revenue.

Admen turned Santa into a jovial salesman whose girth and cheerfulness embodied consumer abundance.

But Marling is most interesting when she discusses the holiday's paradoxes, which mingle materialism and generosity. Retailers and advertisers deliberately have exploited holidays to encourage consumption, but they have by no means stripped these "holy days" of their deeper meaning altogether. Marling notes that our most materialistic holiday is also ironically "the primary occasion for considering the harsh realities of the world, and those who have no trees and puddings."

As a result, charitable giving to the poor has accompanied the holiday since the 19th century. Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, which has ranked among Americans' most beloved Christmas stories since its publication in 1843, offers a largely secular plea on behalf of the less fortunate. Funding charity dinners for the poor at Christmas time became an annual ritual of penance for the well-to-do in American cities in the late 19th century. Wealthy benefactors congratulated themselves for bestowing feasts and presents on their less fortunate neighbors, but could not have failed to recognize the troubling gulf, let alone the connection, between their abundance and others' privation. Christmas' mixture of materialism and charity remains paradoxical to our own day: Each December, as it has since 1912, the *New York Times* juxtaposes full-page advertisements for luxury gifts with small-font reminders urging readers to "Remember the Neediest."

If Christmas provides a "universal memory" for Americans, it is in large part because advertising and celebrating the holiday are so ubiquitous; even Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, railing against the evils on modern technology in his Montana cabin, took time to write Christmas cards to his neighbors each December. Christmas is so omnipresent that many nonbelievers celebrate the holiday, and even members of other faiths cannot altogether ignore it, try as they might. Stephen Nissenbaum, for example, prefaces his own history of the holiday, *The Battle for Christmas*, with a touching reminiscence of his boyhood memories of Christmas as an outsider growing up in an Orthodox Jewish household.

But surely different groups of Americans have distinct recollections of the holiday. Protestants and Catholics, rich and poor, white, black and Latino—all have celebrated on December 25, but they have not celebrated alike. Marling's attempt to delineate the diversity of Christmas traditions, a grab-bag chapter on "Somebody Else's Christmas," lumps together Christmas in warm climes, white Northerners' sentimental but patronizing fascination with black Southerners' humble Christmas celebrations in the 19th century, immigrants' Christmas traditions, even Kwanzaa. A more systematic discussion would fulfill Marling's ambition of recasting our understanding of the holiday. And yet, though *Merry Christmas!* does not completely transform our view of the Christmas we "used to know," it does detail the little gestures and objects that supply the stuff of which Christmases are made. ■

Chris Rasmussen *teaches American history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. During this holiday season, he urges Americans of all faiths to "Put the Chris Back into Christmas."*

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A Man in Full

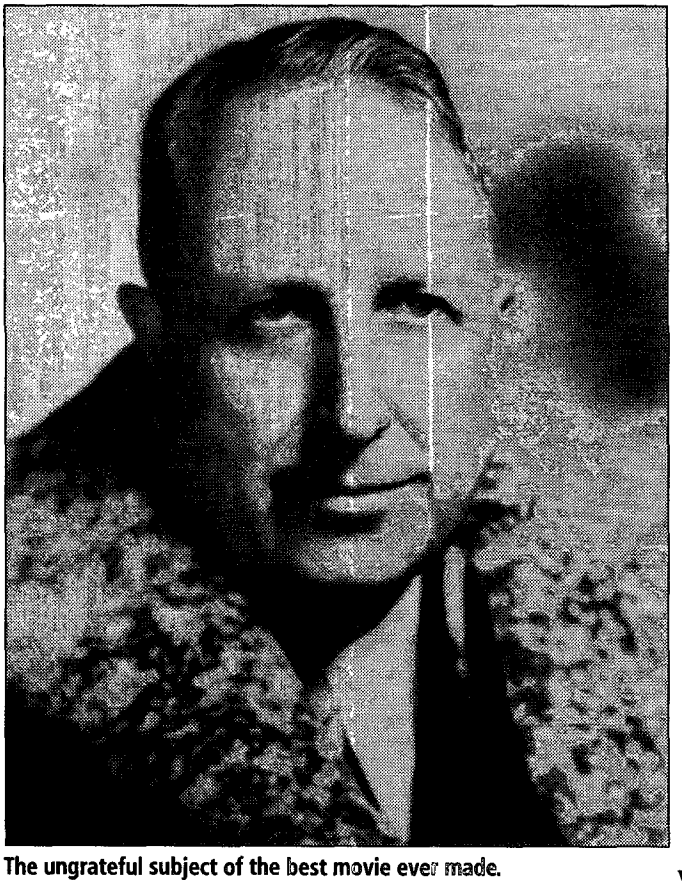
By **Julie Greene**

If your notion of William Randolph Hearst still revolves around a famous sled named "Rosebud," have I got a book for you. David Nasaw's biography *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* deftly restores Hearst to a central place in the history of American culture and politics. This is a terrific read about an astonishing and exasperating demagogue of a man who reinvented himself more often than Madonna, and had the time to do it, his life spanning from 1863 to 1951. With his newspaper empire, mansions, castles, and his cavorting with Hollywood stars and heads of state, Hearst was larger than life. Nasaw's re-interpretation of Hearst is also a surprisingly positive and sympathetic one.

The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst
By David Nasaw
Houghton Mifflin
687 pages, $35

The son of a gold miner, Hearst grew up in San Francisco. In 1886, when his father ascended to the U.S. Senate, Will Hearst took over his father's newspaper, the *San Francisco Examiner*. The newspaper had never done very well, but Will quickly turned it around. He observed the latest trends in newspaper publishing, stealing ideas that seemed the most innovative. As Nasaw notes, the person to watch at the time was Joseph Pulitzer in New York, then giving birth to a new kind of journalism that appealed especially to working men and women. Hearst extended Pulitzer's strategy further. He developed sensational headlines and stories; he paid more attention to crime and to salacious stories of government corruption. He made the writing tighter and more colorful. He added more and higher-quality illustrations.

And Will's paper was, in Nasaw's words, "defiantly pro-labor, anti-capital, and anti-railroad." It took the same positions that any white union man of the day would have. The *Examiner* strongly defended the right to unionize and strike, and fiercely attacked the presence of cheap Chinese workers, who allegedly stole jobs from Americans. But Hearst's paper stood up for the interests of European immigrants, building support among Italian and Jewish communities in particular. Within a few years Hearst had made his paper essential to white working people: "Like the workingman's saloon and the political clubhouse, Hearst's newspaper served as an unofficial public agency, an honest broker, and unpaid intermediary between the people and their government."



The ungrateful subject of the best movie ever made.

These tactics would serve as Hearst's basic formula for success in the years to come. He gradually refined them and added an element of spectacle, using his newspapers to create news as well as report it. Although Nasaw nimbly analyzes and rejects the notion that Hearst pushed the United States into the Spanish-American War ("That Hearst has received so large a measure of credit or blame for that 'glorious war' is a tribute to his genius as a self-promoter"), he also shows how Hearst cagily benefitted from and exploited the war.

Consider, for example, the case of Evangelina Cosio y Cisneros, which broke during the slow news days of 1897. As Hearst's *New York Journal* told the story, Cisneros was the daughter of a jailed Cuban insurgent who was confined to a dungeon when she resisted the "brutal advances of a lust-crazed Spanish colonel." Hearst put the story on his front page day after day and launched a petition drive to free Evangelina. Hundreds of women signed up, from Clara Barton to Mrs. Jefferson Davis. When Spain refused to release her, Hearst hired an adventurer to go to Cuba and liberate the young woman. Soon thereafter Evangelina arrived in New York, where Hearst dressed her in finery, paraded her through the streets to a rally and then a ball in her honor, and finally sent her off to a reception at the White House with President McKinley.

In the next years, between 1896 and 1910, Hearst emerged as one of the most powerful newspaper publishers in the country and with strong support among native-born and new immigrant workers. He embarked upon his true ambition—politics—hoping to use his newspapers and their constituencies as a powerful wedge. These were arguably the most promising and significant years of Hearst's life, for his radical political program (as Nasaw notes, a blend of western populism and eastern urban progressivism) made him a great hero among working people at a crucial time for U.S. labor politics.

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Of course, Hearst was a problematic standard-bearer for this movement. A craven and opportunistic man even by turn-of-the-century standards, Hearst vacillated between vitriolic attacks on Democrats, especially the Tammany machine, and slavish efforts to win them over so they might nominate him for various offices. His life was also filled with scandal. Chorus girls hung on his arms nightly as he visited clubs and dance halls. In 1901 critics accused Hearst of provoking the assassination of President McKinley because of comments published in his newspapers. Then in 1902, after winning election to Congress, Hearst staged a showy fireworks celebration. It went awry, the fireworks exploding and killing a dozen people instantly. Hearst fled to Europe while his lawyers coped with the consequences.

Yet despite scandals that would have deterred other politicians of the day, Hearst aimed his sights on the presidency. To achieve his goal, Hearst began building an independent political force. Like a Perot of the Progressive Era, he created the Independence League to further his political program. Hearst's movement was enticing to working people, especially in cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago where his newspapers had become key allies to the labor movement. Stuck between, as they saw it, the dead-end streets offered by Gompersite conservatism and the Socialist Party, workers rushed to help Hearst build his movement, thrilled at the notion of a radical progressivism that truly had a chance. (This remarkable moment in American political history has long been shrouded in mystery, and Nasaw unfortunately provides little help. Interested only in Hearst, the author underestimates the Independence League and portrays it as merely a vehicle of the Chief's ambitions.)

But in the decades that followed, Hearst gave up on his personal political ambitions. His papers expressed his rather egocentric and rightward-shifting political views. He strongly opposed U.S. involvement in World War I (critics charged he was pro-German) while giving vehement support to intervention in Mexico. After the war he became one of the most prominent advocates of isolationism. In the '20s, alienated from the Democrats, he moved close to Republicans like Calvin Coolidge; but in the '30s he temporarily threw his support to Franklin Roosevelt. Soon, however, Hearst found Roosevelt too authoritarian, accusing the president of being either a socialist or a fascist. Meanwhile, the Chief, still America's most famous newspaper publisher, flirted with fascism himself. He enjoyed meeting with Hitler and hired the Nazi leader as well as Mussolini to write columns for his papers. Hearst turned fiercely anti-labor and became an anti-Communist witchhunter. Anti-Hearst rallies and boycotts cropped up across the nation, supported not only by leftists but also by progressives like John Dewey.

By the end of the decade, these protests had started to hurt newspaper sales, and Hearst's empire was damaged by the Depression as well. Then there were Hearst's always reckless spending habits—Nasaw devotes great attention to Hearst's passion for buying art and building mansions and castles; his attempt to build a movie career for his mistress Marion Davies; and to his legendary entertainments for the Hollywood crowd. These expenses finally threatened to destroy the business. With the banks breathing down his neck, Hearst accepted a $1 million loan from his mistress and agreed to hand effective power over to a trustee, who in turn forced Hearst to sell many of his newspapers and real estate properties—and much of his art collection. Although he would later regain control over his business, it would forever be vastly smaller and less influential.

A media empire, castles, mansions, Hollywood stars, heads of state—and surprising politics.

And then Orson Welles, boy genius of the left, chose Hearst as the subject of his first film. *Citizen Kane*'s portrayal of Hearst and, especially, his wife, mistress and mother was brutal and belittling. Nasaw argues that Hearst did not suppress the picture, as has been widely assumed, because the film did not have the elements of a major crowd-pleaser anyway.

Yet if that's true, it was certainly not for lack of trying: Hearst mobilized all his resources to kill the film. Gossip columnists attacked from every possible angle. Hearst threatened to launch investigations into Communism or release information he had buried about the more criminal and salacious side of Hollywood. As a result, exhibitors declined, one after the other, to show the film. The Hearst papers refused to carry ads for any RKO Studio picture, and RKO in turn delayed releasing *Citizen Kane* for months out of fear that Hearst would take legal action against it. Under these circumstances, to argue as Nasaw does that the film failed because of its unconventional narrative structure, or too many flashbacks, is rather to miss the point. Popular hit or not, the film deserved better than to be completely buried until its rediscovery in the late '50s.

But then, that was classic Hearst. Even during a period of decline, he managed to use his power in unorthodox ways to stomp on Welles and his film. Throughout his life Hearst projected his power and opinions in a way that changed the American political and cultural scene. Nasaw's key achievement lies in showing us just how big and important Hearst was.

Yet Hearst's very bigness and flamboyance beg for analysis that will connect him to the larger context. How did Hearst help generate the broader transformation of the public sphere and American political culture during the near century that he lived? How did he use spectacle and his own political celebrity to shape events? To what extent did he contribute to the rise of anti-communism and American fascism? If Nasaw's biography leaves some important questions for others to answer, his book remains an elegant and riveting story of a complex and tumultuous life. ■

Julie Greene *teaches history at the University of Colorado. She is the author of* Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881 to 1917.

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Publish and Perish

By **Anthony Arnove**

Perhaps more than any other product today, books show the contradictions of commodity under capitalism. Books offer something invaluable, especially when they challenge our ideas, and by extension contribute to changing people, institutions and even societies. But books are an object bought and sold for profit in a highly competitive market and increasingly, as André Schiffrin argues in *The Business of Books*, part of an industry driven by the bottom line.

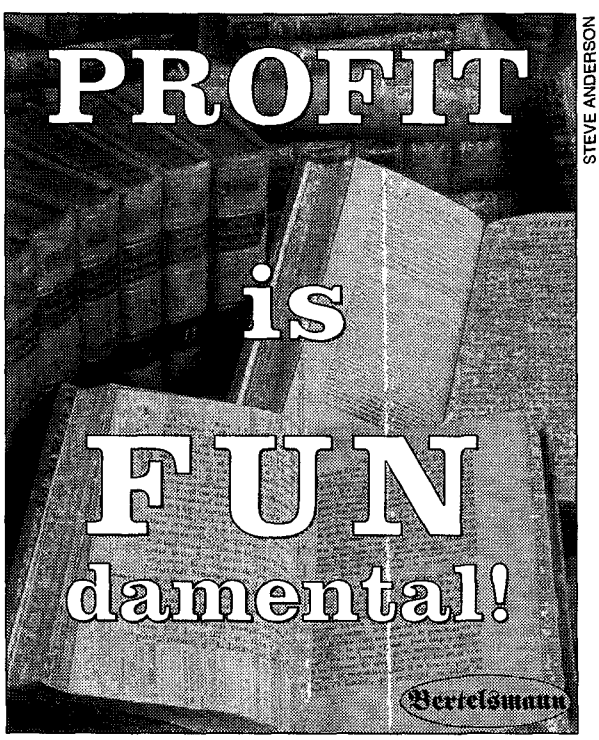
The Business of Books: How International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read
By André Schiffrin
Verso
192 pages, $23

Schiffrin, an editor and publisher who has made a unique contribution to independent and progressive publishing through his work at Pantheon Press since 1962 and, more recently, at The New Press, documents how the particular historical idiosyncrasies of the publishing industry have become harder to maintain against the market's relentless encroachment on the production of ideas.

Books used to be a "gentleman's business," which created its own forms of censorship and exclusivity. But publishers accepted overall rates of profit of less than a few percent, or just breaking even, and recognized that most of their books would actually lose money, with losses to be covered by the exceptional best-selling title. That best-seller provided the income for printing books editors considered important and worthy.

Schiffrin's report of how Pantheon's parent, Random House, was bought by the giant German conglomerate Bertelsmann in 1998 shows how outdated this model has become: "As soon as Bertelsmann had taken over Random House, they issued a press release saying they expected Random House to make a 15 percent profit in the next few years." For Bertelsmann, Pantheon could have been producing any widget for the market, as long as the money on their investment came back with an appreciable return. "Perhaps the most telling statistic about Bertelsmann," Schiffrin writes, "is that 4,000 accountants were reported to be working at its headquarters—many times the number of editors in all its holdings worldwide."

Bertelsmann's acquisition of Random House also meant that "the new combined corporation would be responsible for one out of every three trade books published in the United States." Today, Schiffrin notes, the top 20 firms publish 93 percent of books in the United States. The more than 100 university presses account for only 2 percent of book sales. The remaining 5 percent, Schiffrin notes, is "fought over" by other presses, including all of the independent and progressive publishers (like the one where I work, South End Press).



STEVE ANDERSON

Schiffrin may have taken a while to see the writing on the wall when RCA sold Random House to media mogul S.I. Newhouse in 1980. But his fascinating and distinguished career at Pantheon—which included helping to introduce *Maus*, *Marx for Beginners*, Noam Chomsky and the Simpsons to the U.S. book market—was clearly seen more as a threat than an asset to his new bosses. The New Press was born in 1993 after Schiffrin and his colleagues collectively quit in protest over the direction the higher-ups at Random House were taking Pantheon.

Schiffrin recounts how Alberto Vitale, an Italian banker ("an illiterate businessman") who had been brought in by Newhouse to replace the respected Bob Bernstein as the chief editor at Random House, told the remaining Pantheon staff members that "Pantheon would no longer publish political works." A look at the recent lists from Pantheon, featuring such titles as *How to Win at Golf ... Without Actually Playing Well*, bears out this shift in Pantheon's output, continuing earlier trends.

In the most interesting chapter in *The Business of Books*, "Market Censorship," Schiffrin describes how the most pervasive exclusion of ideas from public debate is not the decree of the state censor but the "hidden hand" of the market, which determines what ideas will be distributed based on the very simple standard of profit. (Though he documents a number of instances when publishers pursuing their actual ideological agenda were quite willing to lose millions of dollars on worthless books by Nancy Reagan and other corporate friends; Newt Gingrich received a $4.5 million advance on his book for HarperCollins, which earned back only one-third this amount—but at the time Newt was in a position to influence legislation that impacted Rupert Murdoch's corporate empire.)

Most authors, and certainly radical ones, wouldn't stand a chance if they had to meet the standard now being set that each title must turn a profit and each editor's acquisitions must be "revenue centers" for the publisher.

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Schiffrin quotes the German publisher Klaus Wagenbach: "If books with small print runs disappear, the future will die. Kafka's first book was published with a printing of 800 copies. Brecht's first work merited 600. What would have happened if someone had decided they were not worth it?"

To Schiffrin's credit, he sees this trend in publishing as part of a much broader shift toward corporate domination of art, public space and workers' lives. "What we experienced [at Pantheon after Newhouse took over Random House] is standard procedure in many publishing houses. Millions of workers involved in plant closings have experienced something infinitely harder. ... Not only our belongings but our jobs and, indeed, our selves have become commodities to be bought and sold to the highest bidder."

No one will be overly surprised that Schiffrin offers The New Press as a positive example of resistance to these trends in publishing. The New Press' achievements are indeed notable, proving that there is still a large—and growing—audience for critical and radical ideas. And it would also be unfair to slight Schiffrin for his remarkable achievements as an editor—helping to develop an extensive list of authors, including Frances Fox Piven, Studs Terkel, James Macpherson and Moshe Lewin—or to begrudge him the fact that few of us in independent publishing could ever hope to command the kind of foundation support he has received for his new venture. (Schiffrin doesn't discuss the role that foundations, especially corporate ones, have played in introducing their own forms of market censorship, though some of the backers of The New Press would certainly be vulnerable to such criticism.)

Yet as enjoyable as his insider's narrative is, one has a nagging suspicion that the history is a bit more messy than Schiffrin presents it. It would have been valuable to learn more about the fights that went on behind the scenes to acquire certain books, the books that were rejected and defaulted to other publishers, the books passed over for political reasons (though Schiffrin does cite a few examples of this), and the compromises entered into to keep the business afloat. I found myself also wondering whether the junior staff at Pantheon would tell the story the same way as Schiffrin does.

More substantively, though, Schiffrin's argument would benefit from more analysis and documentation. *The Business of Books* is an engaging and pleasurable read, and is appropriately not weighted down with footnotes and statistics. But Schiffrin could have kept his style while backing up his case with evidence for the reader less familiar with the publishing business. A chart showing the current pattern of corporate ownership—and concentration—in the industry would have been an important addition (as would have a functional index, unlike the misnumbered and incomplete one in the current edition).

But Schiffrin has started a conversation that is taking on increasing urgency, especially as the number of independent bookstores continues to decline, the concentration of media grows even more dense, and the defunding of libraries and other public institutions make books less accessible. The slogan of French anti-corporate protesters this past spring would make an appropriate conclusion to *The Business of Books*: "The world is not a commodity."

Nor should be the word. But that's a struggle we still need to win. ■

Anthony Arnove *is an editor at South End Press and* International Socialist Review.

All Björk and No Play

By Joshua Rothkopf

When an oppressively bleak movie holds its sway over a certain group—the youngish generation emerging from *Dancer in the Dark* with its cool largely wrecked in a hot flush—it becomes important to ask whether the film is striking a common chord or merely striking out. Is this the popular rebirth of some kind of Cannes-approved solidarity with unjustly doomed mothers working in metal factories? Have years of Madonna videos orbiting in heavy rotation finally made the globe safe again for the rogue musical?

Dancer in the Dark
Written and directed by
Lars von Trier

I think the appeal is something deeper and less-examined: a bliss-out in reverse. Call it a grief-out. Whatever it is, it's cathartic enough to numb viewers into submission; *Dancer* all but gets away with snaring its poor heroine like a dumb animal in a pit, without us noticing the cunning design of the trap. Maybe it's because we're down there with her.

I've talked to people who wanted to resist this picture, a cynical riff on Hollywood fantasia that quickly plunges its overworked daydreamer into tragedy; the fact that they can't, or have even come to appreciate such a flogging, may be the ultimate triumph for Lars von Trier, who you might imagine on the set dressed in jodhpurs directing with a whip. He added that "von" to his name sometime between leaving home and *enfant-terrible*-ing his way out of film school, and it snugly suits the author of multiple manifestos on the state of his art—most publicly the Dogme 95 "Vow of Chastity," which basically rejected one kind of manipulative filmcraft for another. These days his chosen toys are melodrama, digital video and pop-electronica. If all this sounds cutting-edge, it's because it draws easy blood; von Trier goes for that old-time movie religion and scores with it, because it still stings after all these years. Let's all welcome the revival of misery cinema.

To pull this off requires a miracle (or at least a leap of faith) and von Trier has one in Björk, already famous for being the feistiest person from Iceland. A vocalist of almost distracting exuberance, Björk is very "now" and her part preserves that, strategically: She's one hip Czech immigrant living in Washington State circa 1964, with her stretched-out sweater and zippy messenger bag. (Art students take note: This film is after you.) Those thick horn-rimmed glasses aren't just an affectation, however: Selma, her

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character, is going blind and, what's worse, she operates heavy machinery. This is the kind of conception that draws plenty of sympathetic "aws" as well as cringes—von Trier having his fun with shots of her careless hands lingering under hydraulic presses.

Nothing plies an audience's heart quite like pity, and it's from that confidence that further contrivances collect around Selma like shards to a magnet: the young son whose eyes will also fail unless he gets an operation, the saving of money in a candy tin, the loaded gun in a neighbor's desk drawer. And just when you think every shameless card has been played, Selma opens her mouth and the untroubled song of the blithe spirit comes pouring out; the purity is just about devastating.

Regarding these musical numbers: Björk composed them herself, and it's hard to imagine another singer scaling their yowls and coos successfully. They're like happy tantrums or lullabies, and would register more as the emotional release they're meant to be—"little games I play when it goes really hard," as Selma calls them—if she wasn't already such a ray of sunshine, waving at passing trains or gleefully sticking out her tongue during heart-to-hearts. Björk has childlike serenity nailed to begin with; the songs are like delusions on top of delusion. Yet they work anyhow as the sweet reveries of a proto-clubkid obsessed with the beat; clanging industrial noises send her into dreamland, casting a weirdly narcissistic warp over the factory floor as her co-workers strut along.

When Selma sings, we've wandered onto a private stage. The color blooms from intentional drabness into lush greens and mahoganies; it's tempting to call it a music video. (Robby Müller directs the photography, as quietly expressive as his work on *Ghost Dog*.) But this is more a youth film than anything else—it's how someone bopping down the street wearing headphones might see the world. Picture those hyper Richard Lester films for the Beatles but with songs like "She's Leaving Home" instead of "Help!" and you're in the ballpark.

The intimacy is no small achievement, but damn if von Trier doesn't try to interrupt the swoon at every chance. He's got no rhythm; his cutting is all messed up. The publicist in him wants us to know he shot these euphoric scenes using a hundred cameras running at once. If that's really so, it's a bad idea that backfires, inviting a skittishness that all but smothers what little choreography there is. (Not a lot of dancing in the dark or the light here.) You can feel von Trier squirming as Björk steals away his movie with her passion; that he needed to overassert himself in the editing suite reveals fantastic insecurity. He spoils the mood just to make it his.


D. KOSKAS

Björk and Catherine Deneuve look quite fetching in factory chic.

The picture cries out for movement though, and von Trier turns up the heat with his script. I'll try not to reveal all of his precious secrets, telegraphed though they are by centuries of operatic convention and the whole of mush cinema back to D.W. Griffith. Suffice it to say that on one eventful Tuesday, Selma is fired for accidentally ruining a factory machine and returns home to find her stash of bills stolen. A confrontation with the thief (a friend) leads to an especially gory murder and Selma's arrest and pending trial. And—whee!—there's still another hour to go.

Some critics have whiffed anti-Americanism in this—a foreigner's woes in the maw of red-white-and-blue hysteria. Witchhunting does seem augured as Selma wanders out onto the lawn after the murder and, under an American flag, sings to the widow: "I killed your man." But such complaints imply that if von Trier intended something cautionary or possibly corrective, he should have been born in Burbank. (Moreover, these kinds of miscarriages still happen, and not just in Texas.) Either reading is unduly flattering to von Trier, whose true colors show when he places Selma's arrest at a rehearsal for a local production of *The Sound of Music*; it's her director who sneaks away to the phone and rats her out to the cops. This is not America; it's Lars-land.

Even sillier is the characterization of Selma's impulse to willful martyrdom by several critics as some kind of beatifying "self-actualization." For that you need principled sacrifice, not the forced hand that insultingly tries to pass for it here. As in his previous *Breaking the Waves*, von Trier gives all the sensibility to a secondary female friend (Catherine Deneuve, as protective lioness) whose advice goes unheeded by this saint-in-the-making already in ascension: "I've seen what I was and I've seen what I'll be / I've seen it all, there is no more to see."

Yes, the music must go on, but soon even these broadcasts from Selma's imagination become remote—cracking up, like the scared "My Favorite Things" she wails a cappella in her jail cell. If von Trier's goal is to bankrupt our stores of escapism, the victory is his—and he can keep it. His film is for others like him who hate musicals: well-developed ironists looking for a good cry. They can say this is their kind of musical, but it's nowhere near as risky as the ones that dare to hope, or even *Pennies from Heaven*, with its disconnected dreamers still shot through with the possibility of love and safety. When Selma's vacuum of despair finally shuts us off, it's like being canceled out. ■

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The Kid Is All Right

By Ben Winters

The National Anthem"—the third song on what would have been, three or four formats ago, Side A of Radiohead's new record—almost fooled me into thinking that this album was written and performed by human beings from the planet Earth. It starts with a heavy fuzz bass riff, repeated twice before that first cymbal crash, and the song grooves and boogies (who gave Radiohead a horn section?) and defines its layers of internal melody just like a regular rock song. When I saw Radiohead perform it on *Saturday Night Live*, though they deployed their array of pedals and computers and synthesizers, it certainly appeared to be people turning the dials and jabbing at the buttons.

Kid A
Radiohead
EMI/Capitol



But listen to *Kid A* closely and it's harder to say. The complex three-guitar landscapes of their first effort, 1993's *Pablo Honey*, have evolved into thick textures of electronica: Buzzes and hums, spaceships taking off and landing, minor chords held indefinitely on keyboards. Except for the rare rock-out moments, *Kid A* sounds like beautiful movie music for very sad robots.

The official story is that Radiohead are five chums who formed a group in the late '80s pop vacuum, friends who started playing together in Oxford, England a decade and three records ago; a whiny, distorted pop group from the smartest town on Earth who earned MTV stardom on the back of "Creep," an agonized love song sung by the odd man out: "I'm a creep / I'm a weirdo / what the hell am I doing here? / I don't belong here."

If Radiohead have been replaced by robot clones, they've done their homework. For all the departures of *Kid A*, Radiohead have never been a verse/chorus/verse outfit. "Creep" was a pop song, yes, but it was a pop song like "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was a pop song. The lyrics rise and fall in intensity, the textures shift, but the chords stay the same throughout: G to B, a hesitant half-tone up to C, a desperate shift to C minor.

"I'm not here / this is not happening / I'm not here," moans frontman Thom Yorke on "How To Disappear Completely," a moody march-tempo ballad midway through *Kid A*. Radiohead have won a cult following larger than most band's non-cult followings, and still they are poets of dissociation, still going on about not being where they are, about the struggle of the outsider: "Big fish eat the little ones / big fish eat the little ones / ... try the best you can / try the best you can."

What's changed for Radiohead is their positioning in the cultural universe. They have entered that dangerous space for the avant-gardist, where enough people have signed on to their particular brand of eclecticism that they can afford to do what they feel like and remain confident that they will move product. This can be a license for self-indulgence (see Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*), an invitation to abandon better instincts and make dull masturbatory music. Red flags litter Radiohead's recent interviews, statements about "doing it differently or not doing it at all," avoiding "anything that smacked of the old route, or of being a rock 'n' roll band."

After 1997's blockbuster *OK Computer*—harsh and menacing and electric, but undeniably rock 'n' roll—and the self-pitying promotional film *Meeting People Is Easy*, it sounded like Radiohead were morphing into what David Foster Wallace once called in a different context "the inward bound."

All the more remarkable that *Kid A* is a such a fine piece of work, less immediately accessible then *OK Computer* but certainly as rewarding. Dense and marvelously complicated, *Kid A* shows all the signs of being a cohesive, careful work of art. It is at heart a beat record, an inspired combination of programmed and played percussion, propulsive and imaginative: Drummer Phil Selway has co-opted the encroaching computerization of his instrument with sophistication and good grace. Above the drums *Kid A* is richly textural, a layering of guitars and howls and blips. Each song builds up, establishes a particular energy and then floats away, ceding space to the next one. These songs are like weather systems: strange and intangible and beautiful, forceful and then suddenly serene.

Kid A is not a lovable album, not an album for sing-alongs. The lyrics are often intangible, inscrutable, melting in and out of the ambience around them, rarely cresting into definable, isolated hooks. And when they do, Yorke is hitting those improbable super-high notes, the kind that make your vocal chords tighten and ache when you try them in the shower. He's like Wilco's Jeff Tweedy imagined by Philip K. Dick.

Only with "Motion Picture Soundtrack," the warbling dirge that closes out the album, does it start to feel like Radiohead have run out of ideas. Besides, we know already that what we're listening to is inherently visual, the sort of emotion-rich soundtrack music that creates its own pictures, entirely distinct from what's on the screen. ■

Ben Winters *is a playwright in Chicago.*

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Here Comes the Sun

By Evan Endicott

Ahh, 1994. Heavy guitars were raining down metal grit on Seattle. British shoegazers had ditched the chiming dynamics of U2 for the swirling, electrified wail of My Bloody Valentine. Everywhere you looked, flannel-clad bodies were crowd-surfing and shaggy-haired heads were banging.

Figure 8
Elliott Smith
Dreamworks

And in Portland, Oregon, a rainy Pacific Northwest town collecting moss in Seattle's looming shadow, Elliott Smith was recording the melancholy odes to addiction that would comprise his first record, *Roman Candle*.

A member of the angst-rock outfit Heatmiser, Smith was a reformed Grunge disciple exploring the quiet side of depression, a herald of the "Leonard Cohen afterworld" that led Kurt Cobain to unplug around the same time. In a musical landscape where sincerity and humanity were drowned out by fuzzboxes and upper-register wailing, Smith's intimate ballads were a revelation to the few who listened in.

Smith's second album, a self-titled effort released on the Kill Rock Stars label in 1995, brought him acclaim in the fickle indie community, but its raw aesthetic and morbid subject matter made Smith a mere footnote in the national pop scene. Radios weren't ready for the acidic observations Smith offered in tunes like "Needle in the Hay," which could be interpreted as either self-loathing confession or biting critique of a junkie's harrowing downward spiral.

Perhaps playing on this dichotomy present in his songs (which early critics assumed were about Smith's own battles with drug addiction), Smith titled his 1997 follow-up *Either/Or*. It was on this album that he began stretching beyond the confines of his "punk folkie" label, adding electric accompaniment and stick-in-your-head harmonies to augment his downbeat diatribes.

One of *Either/Or*'s many gems, "Pictures of Me," was a prescient account of Smith's revulsion at the prospect of celebrity: "So sick and tired of all these pictures of me / Completely wrong / Totally wrong." The sentiment would mark Smith for the next three years, as critics repeatedly portrayed him as a reticent pop idol who hated the attention foisted upon him by fawning reviewers and fans.

Shortly after *Either/Or*'s release, Smith gained national attention when "Miss Misery," a song he composed for Gus Van Sant's film *Good Will Hunting*, was nominated for an



Academy Award. The surreal Oscar-night performance that followed (which featured Smith, clad in an ill-fitting white tuxedo, playing alongside such adult-contemporary luminaries as Celine Dion and Trisha Yearwood) caught the eye of scouts at Dreamworks' newly formed record division.

XO, Smith's major label debut, shocked many of his fans, who thought the album's sparkling production, soaring string arrangements and multi-tracked harmonies sounded like a bid for Top 40 fame.

On Smith's early recordings (done mostly on 8-track tape in friends' basements), there was a ghostly intimacy that enchanted the listener; you could hear Smith sigh between lyrics or catch the gentle scrape of his fingers on the guitar's strings as he changed chords.

But underneath the DIY aesthetic of his early work were signs of an ambition and talent too vast for the underground to contain. On XO's "Independence Day," an ode to personal transformation built upon the simple metaphor of a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, Smith described his musical evolution even as he predicted the backlash that would inevitably attend it: "Ooh, don't go too far / Stay who you are ... Everybody knows / You only live a day / But it's brilliant anyway."

The metaphor begs an important question: Just who is Elliott Smith, exactly? Acoustic folkie? Troubled troubadour? King of pop? *Figure 8*, Smith's latest effort, finds the artist at a musical peak, yet many fans insist his songs have lost something in the big-budget translation. In one sense, they're right; much of the intimacy of Smith's earlier work has been lost. But what remains is no less satisfying: grand, exquisitely crafted pop tunes that put today's melody-deficient rock acts to shame.

Smith's evolution shouldn't be much of a surprise. From the "Rocky Raccoon"-cribbed intro of *Either/Or*'s "Between the Bars" to the bouncing guitar-jaunt borrowed from *Sgt. Pepper*'s "Getting Better" for XO's "Baby Britain," Smith's Beatles obsession has been a persistent presence in his work. On *Figure 8*, Smith is finally able to internalize the Beatles' knack for song craft without paying direct homage to specific works.

The result is an album packed with innovative arrangements and colored with a diverse tonal palette, such as the haunting piano and echoing drums of "Everything means nothing to me" and the melancholy organ that undermines the optimistic coda of "Happiness."

There is glorious music in Smith's blood, and it pulses stronger than any commitment to the garage-rock aesthetic. Smith seems to be embracing his newfound success with a smile, no longer afraid of the celebrity that surrounds him. As he notes on *Figure 8*'s joyous "L.A.," the future is bright: "Stepping out, out for a change / Good morning all, it's a beautiful day." ■

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Holiday Reading

Women on Top

A few brief questions for you: Do you work for a company run by a woman? If she has children, does she take flextime? Is that tolerated or encouraged in your office? Who represents you in Congress? Any of them women?

My guess is most, if not all, of your answers were negative. That's what journalist Peggy Orenstein found after spending four years interviewing some 200 women. The result, her new book **Flux: Women on Sex, Work, Love, Kids and Life in a Half-Changed World** (Doubleday, $25), examines the state of women's lives three decades into the feminist movement. "Beneath a boundless optimism lies a sneaking suspicion that the rhetoric of 'choices' is in part a con job," she writes, "disguising impossible dilemmas as matters of personal preference. [Women] see 'choices' threatening to morph into cruel trade-offs: double binds that could ultimately trap them in the narrow roles they're expected to escape."

Orenstein weaves her research into a series of engaging profiles. One subject, Mira Brodie, is a tough 26-year-old primed to conquer corporate America. She knows she must play by the boys' rules to advance at her high-finance job. Like her male co-workers, she values aggressiveness and assertiveness. But too much aggression ricochets into a typical female stereotype. "I'm the power hungry bitch," Brodie says. "People think I'm unapproachable. I don't exude those 'Come on in, hang out' vibes."

In evidence of the double standard, Brodie says many of her women friends take off their wedding rings before job interviews. "[Companies] are not sure if you're looking for a job for a year or two before you become pregnant," she says. Brodie's right. A 1996 survey of corporations found that women with children were considered less committed to their work by their bosses.

The undercurrent of workplace sexism leads to a lack of promotion opportunities. Many women Orenstein interviewed became exceedingly frustrated with their stagnant careers and envisioned having a child as a sabbatical of sorts. But staying home, of course, just made them financially dependent on their spouses and more isolated from their peers.

As women typically track into lower-level jobs and make less money than their spouses, it is usually the wife who cuts back to part time if family pressures exceed the tolerable limit. When they do keep their jobs, Orenstein finds that (surprise!) the wife still takes on the bulk of housework and childcare.

The most content women in *Flux* find some Zen-like balance between work and family. But none of them question the fundamental problems afflicting the working world. Orenstein is convinced that women who opt for less pay and more meaningful work—teachers, artists, nonprofit managers—are bogged down in "feminine" roles that are keeping the rest of the good women down. When you aren't a martyr, slaving to punch a hole in the corporate glass ceiling at a Fortune 500 company, you're reinforcing sexist stereotypes.

What's the real solution? A crucial step forward would be working less. A 1999 U.N. study found that Americans clock in more time on the job than anyone else in the world. Our stressed-out, overextended lifestyles cause many of our most common problems: disintegrating marriages, depressed children, decaying community. It also exacerbates sexism. As men make more money in our society, they take on more work to support the family and advance their own careers. As women make less, they also work more to take care of the kids, the dishes and the carpooling. The only way to create genuine balance at home is to give men more free time to handle their fair share of domestic duties and give women a break.

Unfortunately, this era of welfare reform and the bull market places zero value on the caregiver. We are so off-track that a fraternity-like world of wearing shorts to work and breaking at the office foosball table can masquerade as "employee friendly." What happened to progress?

Feminists must remember that our free-fall economic system and weakened safety net engender the inequality we rally against. Along with combatting welfare reform, our agenda should include establishing a 30-hour work week, universal health care, universal childcare and paid leave. Congress needs to create incentives for companies to provide on-site day care, mandatory flextime and sabbaticals. And unions must make caregiving issues a top concern.

Unfortunately, considering the Goodfellas controlling Washington and Wall Street, it looks like we still have a long way to go.

Kristin Kolb-Angelbeck

Union Jack

Memory is both tricky and powerful: It can have tremendous force in the present, both when it is right and when it is wrong. In **Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered** (Temple University Press, $22.95), Jack Metzgar, the college professor son of a Pennsylvania steelworker, grapples with his memories of his father—a powerful, complex and often aggravating figure—and of working-class life in the '50s. Metzgar focuses on the 1959 steel strike, when a half-million workers held out for 116 days, primarily over protection of a clause in their contract that gave them power over their daily work practices. But the story of the strike is a metaphor for a larger project.

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Metzgar is a revisionist: The '30s may have been a dramatic and heroic time for unions, with their sit-down strikes and pitched battles, but it was during the late '40s and '50s, he argues, that American unions engaged in a prolonged series of strikes that dramatically increased the prosperity, leisure time and power on the job of the working class, enriching their lives and the possibilities for their children.

Against a leftist memory of unions at that time as bureaucratic, undemocratic and purged of a socially transformative left-wing outlook, Metzgar counterposes a vision of ongoing shop-floor battles by union grievers like his father, Johnny, with evil bosses like supervisor Yock, and the real transformations wrought by the unions whose bureaucracy was a source of strength. Though he argues for union democracy, he also poses questions about its complex effects on the labor movement.

Striking Steel is also a bittersweet recollection of the comforts and conflicts of working-class life in a time when—unlike the present—most workers' real incomes were rising even more rapidly than incomes of the richest 20 percent of the population. Working-class culture was undone from within to some extent, but also besieged by the rising "professional managerial" class, with its emphasis on individual achievement rather than solidarity. Now neither historians nor workers, even those who lived through that time, recall the workers' triumphs, which are largely attributed to "people's capitalism" rather than labor's struggles.

Workers also often lost their own sense of where they had come from and how they got where they are, as exemplified by Johnny Metzgar—the father who had measured time as before and after the union—who supported Reagan and ended up thoroughly saddened and confused by the revolt of his left-wing son and mild-mannered wife, who quietly decided she wanted her own independent life.

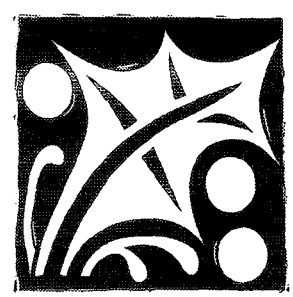
Striking Steel is a touching, complex and thoughtful book, a useful corrective revision of our memories of the postwar decades, a strong defense of trade unions and a reminder of how social class is lived through a network of personal relationships. Metzgar overlooks much about that very past in an attempt to set things straight: In thinking about future strategies, it is important to also remember the shortcomings of unions in that time, and to confront their inability to hold on to power in the face of the employer offensive of the past three decades. But in an extremely valuable way, Metzgar has jogged our collective memories of a maligned and misunderstood time, as well as the typically forgotten working class.

David Moberg

Culture Club

In 1978, when Pat Aufderheide was hired as *In These Times* culture editor by editors James Weinstein, John Judis and Marty Sklar, she asked them what they expected to see in the culture section. "That's what we expect you to show us," one of them replied. "What we know is that politics isn't the same thing as culture."

That sets the theme for Aufderheide's **The Daily Planet: A Critic on the Capitalist Culture Beat** (University of Minnesota Press, $19.95), a collection of reviews and essays written between 1986 and 1998, years during which she wrote for *In These Times* and *American Film*, worked for the United Church of Christ as a media lobbyist and taught at American University's School of Communication.



In her opening essay, "Capitalist Culture and the Left," Aufderheide examines the challenges she faced as *In These Times* culture editor. She edited the culture section for what she saw as typical *In These Times* readers, i.e. "leftists who do organizing or other practical political work, through labor unions, universities and schools, churches, nonprofit organizations, and local and regional government. These are smart people, many of whom are not intellectuals, and who mostly come home late and tired."

In These Times, she explains, "neatly demystifies political action" in its news pages by separating "political actions from oppositional attitude and subcultural personal gesture." But that political understanding was of little help to her as a culture editor, who was "out there alone, between organizers who justifiably sneer at academic fops and intellectuals who rightly disdain the unproblematized."

What is the mission of a left culture critic? "Just as the left has social change toward greater equity as a mandate," she writes, "the left critic's job is to chart how culture is shaped, so that we can understand how it changes and seize opportunities to change it in ways that create possibilities for greater social justice."

This was not an easy job. And it was made more difficult by serving readers who saw artists "as an instrumental resource, perhaps to produce an organizing tape or a poster," not to mention the board members who assumed that the culture section should act as carrot to get readers to to pick up *In These Times* and "read the 'real' news."

Aufderheide concluded that her job as culture editor was not to produce a leftist consumer's guide to culture, where good art had good politics and bad art bad politics. "At the same time," she writes, "I thought we still had the responsibility to exercise the moral judgement inherent in all criticism, but often unspoken in the criticism that operates at the center of cultural hegemony." To that end, she tried to examine both mainstream and marginalized culture as "processes and results of social relationships, and with implications for them."

The articles that follow on popular culture take this tack, whether examining the use of voodoo in film in her essay "Black Magic," or our fascination with UFOs in "When Any Alien Looks Good." The other 25 essays in this collection look at national media policy and our public broadcast institutions, explore the possibility that multiculturalism can revitalize democracy in a polycultural society, and critique the film cultures of Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

In her introduction, Aufderheide mentions the dangers of being pigeonholed as a "left critic," when all the

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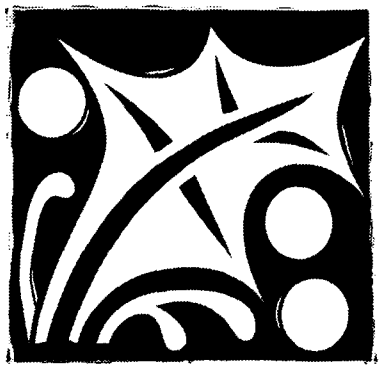
while you know that "left critics are to critics as military music is to music." *The Daily Planet* demonstrates that is not always the case.

Joel Bleifuss

In the Green

Until recently, proponents of free-market capitalism felt free to ignore the environmental impact of unrestrained business. If a steel foundry discharged effluent into a river, killing all the marine life and reaping untold consequences on the lives of humans living downstream, the incident was viewed as an aberration that had little to do with the overall economic system (and its promise of unlimited prosperity).

Today the conventional wisdom has changed. Now most of us accept the theory (first formally espoused by Herman Daly and John Cobb Jr. in *For the Common Good*) that businesses must consider the environmental impacts of their activities, that these must be included in their planning system and accounted for on their balance sheet. The problem is that most businesses have been painfully slow making this change. Many have argued that to factor in environmental consequences will penalize their shareholders and cost jobs. The well-documented **Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution** (Little, Brown, $26.95) exposes these claims as false.



Paul Hawken and Amory and Hunter Lovins argue that it is not only necessary for businesses to include the environment ("natural capital") in their plans, but that it will be profitable for them to do so. The authors begin by defining four types of capital: human, financial, manufactured (such as infrastructure) and natural ("resources, living systems, and ecosystem services").

Then they point out that because American businesses waste a lot of resources, this waste represents a huge business opportunity: "Of the $9 trillion spent every year in the United States, at least $2 trillion annually is wasted." They provide many colorful examples of this refuse: "The amount of waste generated to make a semiconductor chip is over 100,000 times its weight."

So what can business do about it? How can they turn waste products into profits? How can they creatively include "natural capital" in their balance sheets? The authors propose four strategies:

- Radically increase resource productivity—for example, use carbon fiber to make auto bodies that reduce automobile weight without sacrificing safety, thereby dramatically improving mileage.

- Utilize "biomimicry" to organize production processes along the lines of natural systems—for example, use a building's outgoing waste air to pre-dry the incoming "fresh" air.

- Convert to a "service and flow economy"—for example, lease recyclable floor covering instead of buying it.

- Invest in natural capital—for example, generate electricity from photovoltaic cells.

These days Hawken and the Lovins actually spend most of their time as business consultants, so many of the examples come from their experience. *Natural Capitalism* is written in an optimistic, informative, you-can-do-it style. But it doesn't address the question: If these strategies are so effective and so beneficial, why haven't more businesses adopted them?

Most businesses remain focused on the earning picture for the current quarter, and bonded to the (old) conventional wisdom that the environment is a free resource. These businesses haven't considered moving beyond their current practices. They remain stuck in the status quo. How to get through to them remains the important challenge.

Bob Burnett

Baked Goods

"I'm gonna use the Washington Monument as my own personal strap-on dildo," quoth comedienne Margaret Cho at a gay rights rally. A nice (if potentially painful) sentiment, but how, one might ask, is it apropos?

Cho's *bon mot* is one of the little things I am going to miss about *The Realist*, the longtime satirical publication edited by Paul Krassner. The Yippie founder has been announcing *The Realist*'s imminent death for quite some time now, but with the Spring 2001 issue just recently published (for your copy, send two bucks to Box 1230, Venice, CA 90294), the show—really—is over. Included in the final issue is Krassner's "Interview with Myself," where he explains: "When I started publishing in 1958, I was really a lone voice, and now irreverence has become an industry. But *The Realist* has served its purpose—to communicate without compromise—and other voices are following in the same tradition." He now plans to concentrate on a few novels that have been brewing over the years: "It's a challenge to write fiction because you have to make stuff up. I've been making stuff up all my life, but that was journalism."

A healthy dose of that journalism, made up or not, can be found in Krassner's latest collection **Sex, Drugs & the Twinkie Murders** (Loompanics, $19.95). His winning mixture of investigative reportage, memoir and humor—often within the same sentence—remains rare, even in this post-gonzo era of eyewitness nonfiction. From his reminiscences of running an ad hoc underground abortion referral service in the pre-*Roe v. Wade* years ("I Was an Abortionist for the FBI") to his report from a gathering of organized polyamorists ("The Swinger's Convention"), the articles here run the gamut from pain to pleasure, all of it infused with political urgency and poignancy. (Yes, there are politics of swinging, many of whose practitioners, Krassner reports, are cautiously closeted and fear for their jobs.) We're also treated to the occasional high-octane monologue like "Fuck Sunscreen," a

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nonstop merry riff not only on global-warming skeptics, but drug warriors, Pentagon officials and people who don't floss their teeth.

There's not a bum article in the lot, but perhaps my favorite is the book's long centerpiece, "The Case of the Twinkie Murders." The surreal chronicle revolves around the awful events of November 1978, when Jim Jones led his infamous Kool-Aid mass suicide in Guyana and former San Francisco Supervisor Dan White—on a *really* bad sugar high—murdered Mayor George Moscone and the pioneering gay Supervisor Harvey Milk. Krassner details the subsequent farcical trial of White, which he covered for the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*. White, who was also an ex-cop, got off with a voluntary manslaughter conviction thanks to the now-notorious "Twinkie defense"; when the verdict was announced, somebody sang "Oh, Danny Boy" over the police radio. Soon enough, all hell broke loose outside City Hall, and Krassner, on the sidelines of the civil meltdown as a journalist, found himself getting a rib fractured and a lung punctured by rampaging cops. Pretty bleak stuff, yet in the end, Krassner still finds the perfect one-liner: "[White] had served a little more than five years for killing a mayor and a supervisor. The estimated shelf life of a Twinkie is seven years."

A lot of *Sex, Drugs & the Twinkie Murders* was originally published in *The Realist*, but some of it first appeared elsewhere, including two pieces readers will recognize from *In These Times*. "*The Realist* has been a way of life for me," Krassner writes in his final issue, "but, of course, old editors never die, they just run out of space."

Paul, you'll always have room in *our* pages.

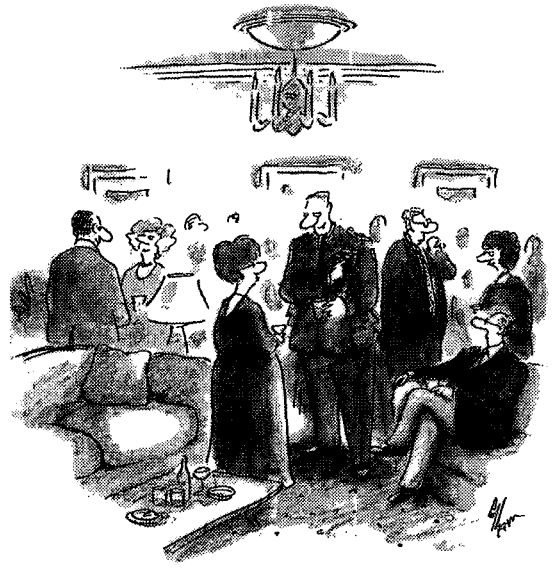
Joe Knowles

TOP SECRET

The government says Wen Ho Lee may have planned to give U.S. nuclear weapon secrets to . . . Switzerland? Yes, really, Switzerland (*Albuquerque Journal*, March 9).

The U.S. intelligence community reports that Chinese spies are everywhere in America, lurking in "low-key" locales like public libraries (*Washington Times*, March 9).

After news of the Wen Ho Lee case broke, Los Alamos removed a copy of the periodic table of elements from its web site, lest some enemy "steal" that peculiarly American "secret" too.



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Sydney B. Spiegel, author of
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was fired in 1973 for "inability to cooperate with the school board and administration." The successful plaintiff in Spiegel vs. Board of Education, he was restored to his classroom in Cheyenne by order of the Wyoming Supreme Court, 1976: "We hold employees have a right ot criticize employers." His book ($13.95, Pentland Press) is available at your local and internet bookstores.



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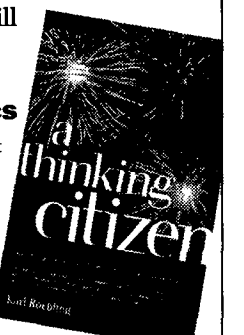
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Tim Russert, who likes to pose as the Mt. Rushmore of objectivity while advancing neocon frameworks for interpreting the news, maintained that Bush gained ground because he established "parity" with Gore on command of foreign affairs. Can I please remind folks that, in the second debate, Bush said, "It's important to be friends with people when you don't need each other so that when you do there's a strong bond of friendship," by way of explaining overarching foreign policy principles. If this is "parity," I think it's time to nominate my springer spaniel for president.

On ABC the creepy, preening George Stephanopoulos, who often overcompensates for having worked for President Clinton by tilting to the right, also proclaimed Bush the winner after the second debate. But this wasn't just his assessment. On *Nightline*, he insisted that "all the polls show he won." ABC flashed a snap poll of debate viewers showing that after the debate, 54 percent supported Bush. What the network didn't tell viewers—in part because it was probably too soon to tell—was that the majority of debate viewers that time were Bush supporters. Fewer Gore supporters had tuned in this time around. So of course more viewers supported Bush! CBS also flashed an instant poll showing that 51 percent of those who watched said Bush won. These were meaningless figures, but they fit beautifully into the hands of the Bush spin doctors. A highly partisan assessment was presented as totally neutral.

> Say it with me, over and over: right-wing bias, right-wing bias, right-wing bias.

The same conservative spin held sway after the third debate. Gore, whatever you think of him or his "body language," clearly had a better command of the issues. Bush promised an African-American woman "affirmative access," a non-existent policy, and seemed, at times, flustered and unfocused. Yet with a few exceptions, Matthews, Kristol, et al. proclaimed this a "tie" or a "draw"—and some suggested that Gore lost, again, because he was too aggressive onstage.

Then there were the focus groups of undecided voters in Tampa or Cincinnati we saw after the debates. Various commentators have already complained about the media's inordinate emphasis on the least informed and most confused members of our citizenry as opinion leaders for the rest of us. Less noted by these same commentators, however, was how these displays reinforced conservative spin on the campaign. The focus groups on MSNBC were run by Frank Lutz. The network introduced him as a pollster, not a *Republican* pollster, which is what he is. We don't know how Lutz chose members of the groups, but was it just a coincidence that after both debates the majority of Lutz's voters started swinging toward Bush?

The mainstream media bought the Bush camp's spin on all the debates: that Bush won the first because Gore came on like a pit bull, won the second because Bush didn't identify a Balkans country as "Yugoslabovia," and won the third because Gore's pacing and body language were too aggressive. How did such assessments turn into the prevailing common sense?

This, my dears, is no accident. There are three cable news channels now that present 24-hour news and talk: CNN, MSNBC and FOX. Of them, Fox is openly and proudly conservative, with its roster of white male conservatives on *The O'Reilly Factor*, *The Beltway Boys* and *Hannity & Colmes*, its token right-wing blonde Paula Zahn (whose regular guests on *The Edge* include Pat Robertson) and its star anchorman, Brit Hume, former tennis partner of George H.W. Bush. MSNBC, while parading as unbiased, is dominated by the conservative commentary of Chris Matthews and Don Imus. Matthews easily migrates to the *Today Show* as a supposedly neutral analyst, and did so after all the debates to spin for Bush. CNN, the least biased of the three, still has a show hosted by Evans and Novak, but none hosted by, say, Barbara Ehrenreich or Bob Herbert. For balance, on Sundays, the show has four white men—Evans, Novak, Hunt and Shields, the token liberal.

Now it's true that MSNBC or FOX may only have 200,000 viewers at a time. But because they are two of the three available news and commentary channels, and because their pundits have regularized their migratory patterns into the mainstream media, their conservative influence has been magnified.

Writers for Rupert Murdoch's *The Weekly Standard*, a conservative rag, are everywhere, as if the magazine were the equivalent of *Time* or *Newsweek*, but it is never identified as right-wing. The night before the election, *The Newshour* on PBS featured four commentators, all of them well-to-do white men over 40, with one, David Brooks, from *The Weekly Standard*, yet no one of any gender from the left-wing press. Likewise, "experts" from the Manhattan Institute abound, yet it is never identified as a conservative think tank. And so on and so forth.

Many maintain that the remarks of pundits have little effect on voters' ultimate preferences in the voting booth. But I think we still aren't sure about the impact of these instant comments, polls and focus groups, especially when their biases fuse. Obviously, they can make people like me feel like we've gone through the looking glass when we compare our own assessments of the emperor's utter nakedness with the pundits' descriptions of his gorgeous, golden robes. But these recent features of political broadcasting may have more long-term, corrosive effects. Snap judgments about appearance and demeanor are now perfectly legitimate measures of political merit, and this kind of simplification is the bulwark of conservative politics.

The right did not gain control of the airwaves overnight. They worked at it for years. They complained to networks and advertisers about "liberal bias"; in Congress they threatened and defunded the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; and their media conglomerates, such as Murdoch's News Corporation, have the money (and the blessings of the government through the Telecommunications Act of 1996) to buy their own conservative outlets.

It's time for us to fight back. Keep a notebook by your TV. Keep track of how many conservatives you see on the news and talk shows. Let's start barraging them with e-mails, letters and faxes about right-wing bias. Say it with me, over and over: right-wing bias, right-wing bias, right-wing bias.

The fifth column took an empty vessel and told us, over and over, that it was filled with gold. That they got away with it may be the most infuriating—and dangerous—legacy of this election. ■

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BUSH'S FIFTH COLUMN

SO MUCH FOR THE LIBERAL MEDIA

By Susan J. Douglas

By the time you read this, we will have been awash in much hand-wringing about the media's collective behavior on Election Night. There will be much breast-beating over the news media's reliance on exit polls, and over calling races too soon, only to have to rescind projections a few hours later.

I'm especially hoping for a pharmacological analysis of Dan Rather's intake on Election Night—what was he on, anyhow? "This is the dance of democracy," he hyperventilated as midnight approached. Then morphing into electronics salesman mode, he added, "This day, votes only talk, everything else walks." The race in Florida, gushed Rather, was "hot enough to peel house paint."

And although he too lobbed the requisite number of sports metaphors ("Gore hasn't been able, as sportscasters say, to get to the big house"), what was notable was the repeated use of ...bling metaphors. For Gore to win, "he'll have to run the ...ble"; he was "looking for an inside straight draw." Quite a few of the boy pundits—Fred Barnes, William Kristol—echoed the "run the table" line. Hmmm American democracy as a crapshoot—maybe they're on to something.

And what were those graphics? Tim Russert on NBC kept bringing out his little white greaseboard that flashed glare into the camera while he wrote his latest illegible electoral calculations on it with magic markers. Over on CBS, the visuals were just as high-tech. As we looked at an electoral map of the country, Rather's giant hand, holding a No. 2 pencil as a point-...n to identify states, reminding us of the ...l to hold Mr. Bill on *Saturday Night* ...s, the ...verage was irresponsible *and* surreal.

But the real story about the media and Campaign 2000 occurred months and weeks before Election Night, and remains the most important story for progressives after the election: the total conquest of political commentary by the right. What this meant for the Bush campaign was simple. A man of very limited experience and knowledge with an appalling record as governor, a man who, frankly, started making Dan Quayle seem like a policy wonk, had a fifth column working on a daily basis to legitimate his candidacy.

For millions of us, this led to an eerie sense, especially during the debates, of a complete disconnect between our perceptions and what we were told we saw and heard by the "experts." We began to think that maybe we had seen an exchange different from the ones the pundits saw. In the second debate, for example, Bush said: "We have to work with Nigeria. That's an important continent." He also proposed that the United States make a trade with Third World countries that have "valuable rain forest lands": We'd forgive their debt if they'd fork over the rain forests to us. (That comment was a whopper, much more important than whether he will fry two people or three in the James Byrd case, and *nobody* called him on it.)

So when the second debate was all over, and Bush speechwriter Peggy Noonan, professional Clinton-hater Chris Matthews, Don Imus regular (and ethically challenged) Mike Barnicle and others on MSNBC, FOX and elsewhere suggested Bush might be the next Disraeli, many of us felt like we were in the former Soviet Union listening to something out of *Pravda*. The ubiquitous William Kristol (ABC, CBS, NPR) pronounced Bush the clear winner.

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